

EXODUS OF THE HAITIAN AMERICAN YOUTH
FROM THE HAITIAN CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

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This model addressed the exodus of Haitian American youth from churches throughout the Diaspora. Laypersons were trained to conduct a series of in-depth interviews. The interviews revealed the stories of the youth and initiated a learning process focused on silence disorder and liberation. This model aims to enhance the church leader's abilities to give voice to the Haitian American youth. Interviews were transcribed and used by the author to write the story of the Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches. Results showed that giving voice to the Haitian American youths will bring them back and also stop their exodus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None of us accomplishes anything alone. This statement is certainly a reality in my life and has been evident during the process of the completion of my doctoral studies. This work has been a long and challenging journey, the seeds of which were planted early in my childhood and, even though completed in this context, continues on. Rooted and immersed in the essential sacred stories of people of faith, both past and present, I have become more deeply aware of and attuned to the deep abiding love that transcends time and space, a love which has inspired my research and writing.

Particularly, I am grateful to my parents Jeanine Honorat and Jacques I. JeanBaptiste. I give Praise and thanks to God for my loving and supportive family: my children: Naphtalie, Isaac, Jehonathan Librun, Romario Maxime and Wilnia Previlus. To my brothers: James Previlus, Roland Previlus, Jacob Jean-Baptiste; to my sisters: Benose Jean-Baptiste; Guetty Jean; and Jeanne Samson; to my niece Martine Previlus as well as my cousin: Kephny Maxime, my aunts: Yanick and Claudette Maxime, my grandmother Felicite Maxime and friends who have graced my life with their compassion and caring, especially Paule Lascaze, Beatrice Auguste Moleus, Tamara Lafontant, Marie, Micheline, Natacha Monjeois; Professor Leon Bernard; Rev.. Gustave from ACARAP, Ev. Joseph Jacques Telor.

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During this journey I have been blessed with wonderful companions who shared in the struggles and in the joys of doctoral studies, friends and fellow ministers who became a community of faith with whom I felt free to laugh and to cry, to pray, to play and to study Rev. L. Eugene Vaughn, Rev. Barbara Morgan, Rev. Jose Alfrena, Ev. Andre Laurent, Dr. Teresa McIlwain. I would like to say a special thanks to Rev. Dr. Jacky Baxter who lends me his time, support and expertise in assisting me to achieve my goal.

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INTRODUCTION

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young,
but set an example for the believers in speech, in life,
in love, in faith and in purity.¹

. . . and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"²

In these days, throughout the Diaspora a dilemma shared by many Haitian American youths has arisen. We find ourselves in the midst of religious institutions that channeled God's grace in our lives. The dilemma is a conflict that produces silence disorder and a massive exodus. As an Haitian woman involved in the community wrestling with the problem of the exodus, I have found myself at times dismayed, elated, outraged, and hopeful. To avoid the despair that drives many Haitian American youth away from the Haitian churches and the community, I sought a sense of perspective in the history behind our present condition.

Haiti and the United States are two countries that emerged from European colonialism to become the first independent nations in the modern Western Hemisphere. Joined by history and geography, Haiti and the United States have much in common and they are quite different.

¹ 1 Timothy 4:12 NIV

² Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have A Dream," Federal Holiday Commission.

One was colonized by France; the other by Great Britain. The independence of one led to freedom from slavery; the independence of the other did not, at least not for more than 70 years. One became a weakened, isolated pariah state following its independence; the other became stronger and was ultimately welcomed by its European allies into the community of the great powers of the 19th century.

Yet, despite divergent paths and United State efforts to distance itself from its neighbor, the two nations remained linked, sometimes positively, other times negatively. This writing explores historical connections between Haiti and the United States over roughly a 100 year period from the United States War for Independence to Haiti's eventual diplomatic recognition by the United States and the subsequent journey of the former slave and abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass, to Haiti as one of its first United States Ambassadors.

Over the long road of history that leads us to today certain events can sometimes be forgotten, overlooked, or set aside. In this regard, our approach to exploring the links between Haiti and the United States accents negative relationships between the two nations, with a particular emphasis on Haiti's positive influence on the United States.

Long before the Haitian Revolution would see its first uprising in the city of Cap, men from the French colony of Saint Domingue were fighting elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. This included participation in the United States fight for independence.

In 1779, coming off a glorious victory off the coast of the Caribbean Island of Grenada, French Admiral Count Charles-Henri d'Estaing organized a volunteer corps of free men of color to travel to the rebelling British colony of Georgia. Their objective was to lay siege to the important southern port town of Savannah, held by British troops. Rebellious South Carolina Governor John Rutledge and General Benjamin Lincoln had

invited Comte d'Estaing, believing French involvement in Georgia was the only way to save the colony from falling completely into British hands³.

When Haiti's leaders secured the country's independence in 1804 they took a truly revolutionary step: they outlawed slavery. At this time, only in Haiti, among all other places in the Western Hemisphere, was slavery officially forbidden! Starkly standing as a beacon of freedom literally surrounded by Spanish, French, British and Dutch Caribbean colonies where slavery was condoned, the former French colony, as a result of this bold move, immediately became an international pariah state to be isolated and weakened.

A Negative United States Response

The United States quickly joined the European colonial powers in shunning Haiti, refusing to formally recognize its neighbor's independence. Guiding this decision was the considerable fear held by many United States political and economic leaders of the day that Haiti's "virus"⁴ of freedom-from-slavery would spread to plantations from Maryland to Georgia, disrupting an economy and society dependent on sanctioned human inequality and forced human bondage.

When, in the decades following Haiti's independence, the issue of recognition was debated in the United State Senate, Southern senators were aghast that the United States might consider recognizing a nation formed by black slaves who rebelled against white slaveholders. Micial Nerest stated: In the 1820's, a Senator from South Carolina,

³ Ferguson, James. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers*. Oxford, U.K.: B. Blackwell, 1987.

⁴ The Haitian Exodus: The Flight from Terror and Poverty." *Caribbean Review* 11, no. 1 (1982).

Robert V. Hayne, starkly summarized this position when he stated, “Our policy with regard to Haiti is plain. We never can acknowledge her independence.”⁵

With such powerful resistance toward Haiti, it would take the United States fifty eight years to formally recognize its neighbor. In 1862, a bill to recognize Haiti passed the United States Senate and was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. Only at a time when it was engaged in a bloody civil war fueled largely by the issue of slavery, and on the cusp of emancipating its own slaves, could the hemisphere’s first independent country recognize the hemisphere’s second independent country.⁶

The diverse vignettes, outlining the links between Haiti and the United States, illustrate an array of relationships between these two nations born of a shared European colonial past. This section also illustrate an underlying and abiding linkage of the neighboring countries and their people, no matter how one perceived the other, whether it be with fear and trepidation, or with joy and a warm embrace.

The inextricable links between Haiti and the United States portrayed in this writing also illustrate times when the younger and smaller of the two nations played a critical role in contributing toward the well being of the older and larger nation of the pair. Haiti’s role in the purchase of Louisiana and the powerful positive message that Haiti represented to those most oppressed in the United States, its slaves and freed men and women are two examples that come to the forefront.

What is the Diaspora? Diaspora is a nation that is living outside of their native land. In this context when we talk about Diaspora, we mean the Haitian Diaspora. Originally, the Greek word Diaspora designated exclusively the Jewish populations

⁵ Ibid 24

scattered over the world after the Babylonian captivity. Today, its meaning has broadened, and it is employed to refer to any dispersal of people to foreign soils. In this latter context, we use it to identify the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in many countries of the world.

The Haitian Exodus began soon after rigged elections which put dictator François Duvalier in power in 1957. Fearing the rampant political repression and killings, thousands of people left the island and sought political asylum abroad. Subsequently, the continued repression and killings, compounded by the deterioration of the economy, compelled thousands more to flee. During the presidency of Jean-Claude Duvalier, we witnessed the massive departure of the so-called "Haitian boat people", mainly toward the shores of the United States. This later wave was responsible for the very significant growth in the demographics of the Haitian Diaspora during the 70s and the 80s. In 2000, French historian Jacques Barros estimated its population at about 1800,000 or even 1,000,000. Although there has been no recent scientific survey, we can be sure that today's number surpasses the 1,000,000 mark, including a high percentage of intellectuals, professionals, technicians, killed workers, etc. In the United States alone there must be more than 900,000 Haitian émigrés. Among the other countries or regions with a high number of Haitian settlers, are the Bahamas, Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, French Guyana, Jamaica, and Martinique. In the Dominican Republic, there are about half a million individuals identified by the Dominican Government as Haitians, many of which are not recent arrivals, but actually native-born Dominicans, who are denied citizenship because they allegedly "look" Haitian.

⁶ Ibid 120

So well known is the saga of our "boat people" that there is no need to dwell upon it here. Let me instead bring to your attention a not-so-well-known page of Haitian-American history. At the beginning of the 19th Century, just a few years after the triumph of the Haitian Revolution, many Americans were given the opportunity to emigrate to Haiti under a program initiated and financed by its government. In June 1824, when President Jean-Pierre Boyer announced the implementation of the program, the news was warmly received in many circles in the North of the United States. On August 23rd of the same year, the ship "Charlotte Gray" left Philadelphia with a group of 58 people organized by the renowned Bishop Richard Allen who, 30 years earlier, had to buy his freedom for 2000 continental dollars. Among the 28 people was the Bishop's own son, John who carried a letter from his father to President Boyer, in which the elder Allen wrote:

My heart burns affectionately in acknowledging the kind offers you have made to these poor oppressed people here in the United States, by offering them an asylum where they can enjoy liberty and equality⁷.

Haitian people are known to be a simplistic and naïve nation. In the old days when strangers from other nationalities would visit Haiti. A Haitians people would give the foreigners a reception as that of inferiority serving superiority, therefore many of the issues that we are dealing with today as a Diaspora derived from an inferiority

⁷ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990.

Wilentz, Amy. *The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

complex state of mind that is due to our history as a nation that has served at least 200 years of slavery.

As far as silence disorder in the Haitian churches concern, it stems from the naïve and simplistic characteristics in which the people naturally possess, because of an inferior state of mind. When they arrived to a more developed civilization, they carry with them the complex of inferiority parallel to that civilization. As a result, Haitians are not prone to freedom of expression. They are slow in adaptation to their newly adopted foreign country. We as a people are easily mystified by society rules and by the rules of that current society. Such complex state of mind does not allow a healthy or advanced outlook on life, therefore the issues that have paralyzed us as a church is evident of our dysfunctional past.

The recent exodus of the Haitian American youth has left many leaders utterly dumbfounded at the sheer force and its devastating effects on the churches and community. Thus far, this exodus has claimed most of the Haitian American professionals and has driven many out of the Christian life. As we look on in stunned silence, we may ask ourselves what is going on in our community?

Most of the traditional Haitian churches do not exhibit a good relationship between adolescents and leaders. Today throughout the Diaspora, we find them lost in a morass of formidable challenges, tough decisions, and uncertain prospects. They do not often talk about the shock, the denial, the fear, the anger, the despair, the internal oppression and the silence disorder that marked their years in the Haitian churches.

Culturally, the age-old assumption that children are naturally inferior and thus belong in subordinate positions is being overturned. The way in which Haitian American youth conceptualize silence and internal oppression seems to be a crucial yet subtle aspect

of everyday life. Our young adults have a thirst for fellowship and a hunger for a word from God that would meet them right at their cross-cultural hangs-ups. They are seeking for new activities with speakers and worship leaders who respect them for who they are and understand their language, their culture, and their issues. They want their voice to be heard and they want to function in their church.

Internal Oppression is defined as: when human beings are being forced to submit to rules regulations and concept. We usually find a certain amount of resistance. In the case of internal oppression as it deals to Haitian American youth, they are being forced to a language that's not practically theirs. They are being forced to submit to a way of life that belongs to their parent's culture, automatically they resist it, because it is not part of the educational upbringing that they are experiencing in this country.

My involvement in the Doctor Of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary with Dr. Sam Mann has been one of the greatest events of my life. The program has changed my life, my perspective, my views, my attitudes and my goals in life. I found something that exceeded my high expectations and my desires. Light and strength have come through my peer group. My intense anger, acute depression and feelings of helplessness have come to an end. The life story telling of the Haitian American youth has become one of the best tools that I have found to transform the Haitian American Christian community through the new ministry that I am opening in March 2005. The Network of Life Story Telling literally will help my ministry to a higher level. Through those tools, the Haitian American youths I am targeting will come back and stay in the churches and community.

The model of ministry offered is the key that unlocks the silence disorder; it is a clear and succinct organizational design. Central to the model is the concept of story

linking. Story linking is a process whereby persons connect components of their everyday life stories with the Christian faith story found in the Bible. Stories provide the glue that holds a community together. The task of rediscovering, celebrating, and preserving communal memories. How do stories relate to leadership? Actually, there are many ways. Stories, including narratives, myths, and fables, constitute a uniquely powerful currency in human relationships. Stories speak to both parts of the human mind: its reason and emotion. Stories provide a tool for articulating and focusing vision. Stories provide a medium of communication, both internally within an organization and externally to customers, potential customers, business partners, business rivals, investors, and others. Increasingly, various companies are becoming aware of how stories can serve as a market research tool, a public relations and marketing tool, and a tool for learning and communicating important institutional knowledge about effective business practices, adapting to innovation, etc. Stories provide a tool for conceptualizing and identifying challenges and opportunities. Stories provide a powerful tool for capturing and leveraging knowledge, one that is complementary to logical thinking, what we think of as "just the facts."

There's still another way to think about stories. Stories are evocative systems of patterns. They provide a map charting the way to the future. They include travel hints in the form of viewpoints and links to archetypal story structures and themes that inspire and motivate people. As pattern systems, stories reveal patterns and bring to the surface valuable information that might otherwise go unnoticed, unharvested.

Cognitive psychologist Donald Norman (1993) explains, "Stories aren't better than logic; logic isn't better than stories. They are distinct; they both emphasize different criteria. I think it very appropriate that both be used in decision-making settings. In fact, I

rather like the ordering that often happens, usually accidentally: First the data and the logical analysis, then the stories. Yes, let the personal, emotional side of decision making have the last word." (p. 128) Norman explains further, "Stories have the felicitous capacity of capturing exactly those elements that formal decision methods leave out. Logic tries to generalize, to strip the decision making from the specific context, to remove it from subjective emotions. Stories capture the context, capture the emotions. Logic generalizes, stories particularize. Logic allows one to form a detached, global judgment; storytelling allows one to take the personal point of view, to understand the particular impact the decision is apt to have on the people who will be affected by it." (p. 129)

I have been active in the Haitian churches for more than twenty-nine years. The story of Haitian American youth has empowered, guided and transformed me. This document develops a model for Christian leaders, teachers, ministers and parents. It intentionally seeks to assist Haitian American leaders in identifying, and effectively dealing with varied cries for liberation. Silence disorder is sinful and the tragedy is that too many of our leaders have formed their opinions and carved out their convictions without looking to God for his direction. The message of this writing is not to offend and to convict the leaders of the Haitian churches, rather the application of salt and light in a dark and decaying society.

Chapter One introduces the reader to the origin and background of Haiti. It also talks about the context of my ministry, in which two specific events are briefly profiled, followed by my own experiences in the Haitian American churches.

Chapter Two discusses the literature, especially as it relates to the non-theological theoretical foundations supporting the model.

Chapter Three deals with the theoretical, biblical and historical foundations. It examines these foundations with a review of literature.

Chapter Four begins an account of the methodology of the church story model with a description of the interview process.

Chapter Five continues the account of the methodology. It describes what happened during the process.

Chapter Six summarizes my findings. It includes a summary and conclusion to the effect that giving voice to Haitian American youth will encourage them to come back to the Haitian churches and community.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

How does one explain Haiti? What is Haiti?

Haiti is the eldest daughter of France and Africa.

It is a place of beauty, romance, mystery, kindness, humor, selfishness, betrayal, cruelty, bloodshed, hunger, and poverty. It is a closed and withdrawn society whose apart-ness, unlike any other in the New World, rejects its European roots.

Haiti is roosters crowing at dawn, drums in the night, coffee plucked wild from mountainsides, rum from ancient iron kettles. Haiti is green mornes, headlong valleys, burning cane fields, dark sea, bright flowers, vast ruins and gingerbread houses.

Haiti's romance comes in the catch of a meringue, the call of the lambi, the swirl of white robed hounsis dancing for the gods of Africa.⁸

Yet romance and mystery lie in the eye of the beholder. From that perspective, for nearly two centuries the real Haiti has been obscured by distance, prejudice, illusion, oppression, dictatorship, misunderstanding, and accumulated misinformation. Moreover, much that is obscured is neither beautiful nor romantic. Venality and selfishness are everywhere; so are faithlessness, revenge, oppression and misery. Above all Haiti is poor, primitive, proud, and hungry.

Haiti is a nation known for its poverty and civil strife. It is currently the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti has always been a nation of conflict. Beginning when Christopher Columbus first spotted Haiti in December of 1492, the country was a land of oppression and turmoil. The Spanish explorers settled the island and the first

⁸ Jacotte Librun.

official shipment of African slaves to the island arrived in 1510. Spanish rule was challenged and the island faced its first round of poverty when King Ferdinand ordered an embargo against trade with foreigners. Colonists who did not leave the island lost their livelihood and lived “in poverty and idleness, cohabitating with slave women.”

The French began to threaten Spanish control of the island around 1630 when they commenced competing for a settlement on Tortuga, a smaller island near Haiti. By 1659, France had resisted British and Spanish attacks and began to govern certain settlements on the main island as well. One of these settlements, La Tortue, according to Heinl and Heinl became the “mother” of the other island colonies. Thus began the French rule of Haiti, a rule that would last for 130 years.

In the late 1700s, several important changes occurred throughout the Western world that some claim accelerated the beginning of the Haitian Revolution. The American Revolution led to the freedom of the United States from British colonial rule and the French Revolution undermined the power of France over the French colonies. By 1790, blacks across Haiti were demanding freedom and equality. The racial issues still present in the society today were moving to the forefront of national politics. White citizens in Haiti continued to try to keep people of color out of politics and positions of power, but several free Afro-Haitians began to emerge as leaders in the equality movement. Vincent Ogé began to organize a militia of free blacks and demanded the end of racial discrimination. This initial uprising was violently quashed with many of the revolutionaries executed (Ogé brutally) or forced into hiding. Upon hearing about the brutal executions occurring in Haiti, the National Assembly in Paris declared that free people of color born of free parents had equal political rights.

Tensions arose between free whites and free blacks; talk of secession commenced. In August of 1791, a slave revolt began⁹. The slaves demanding freedom joined the free blacks fighting for equality and Haiti became divided by color lines. Only when France granted citizenship to free blacks did the conflict begin to diminish. This separated the issue of equality from the issue of freedom and free blacks left the rebellion. Had the proportion of slaves to whites been lower or recent slave arrivals been fewer, the revolution might have ended there. However, tropical diseases reduced the French military personnel fighting to control the slaves and slaves greatly outnumbered the free whites on the island. The last of Napoleon's forces left the island in November of 1803. "There exists outside of Haiti no other case of an enslaved people breaking its own chains and using military might to defeat a powerful colonial power."¹⁰

In 1804, there was great hope for the island. The former French imperialists had been defeated and Haiti became the first free nation of African descendents. Haiti was the wealthiest Caribbean nation, providing an abundance of cotton, indigo, and sugar that was traded to Europe. Their first revolution met with success and may have set precedents for the use of violence as the tool for social change that is seemingly inherent in the society today. Their victory warranted celebration, but Haiti's struggles were not over.

The Revolution of 1804 left Haiti free but in disarray. Haiti's first black leader, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, declared, "Never again shall colonist or European set foot on this soil as master or landowner."¹¹ Dessalines was assassinated in 1806. He was the first of many Haitian leaders to be murdered. Between 1835 and 1860, there was the chaos of

⁹ Thomas Madiou, *Histoire D'Haiti*, 137.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti The Duvaliers And Their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 177.

¹¹ Madiou, *Histoire D'Haiti*, 220.

economic decline. At the end of 1860s, Haiti was in turmoil. Foreign powers used the chaos of economic decline as an opportunity to increase their influence within the country by funding opposition groups and supporting revolts. Haiti's dependency on other nations for financial support allowed for excessive foreign influence. In 1888, the U.S. was supporting the revolution against the government. In 1912, Syrians in Haiti encouraged a movement that eventually led to the destruction of the presidential palace.

By 1914, the United States, Great Britain, and Germany allowed their military forces to enter the country in order to provide protection for their citizens. These superpowers plus France began to struggle to control the Haitian economy. Though Haiti was destitute, trade with Haiti was important to the world powers. Fearful of losing trade dominance to Germany, the United States occupied Haiti in July of 1915. The rationale for entering Haiti called for order to be reestablished and the defense of American interests. The U.S. occupied Haiti for 20 years, during which twenty thousand Haitians were killed as they resisted American forces.

Many Haitians found the foreign influence unwelcome and oppressive. Haiti became a bargaining chip in world politics. After the early stage of revolt, relative calm pervaded the country, enforced by United States military personnel. Though Haiti benefited from an improving infrastructure and more stable economy, Haitians were being excluded from positions of leadership in their own country. At last, it seemed that Haitians were on the road to a civil democracy, but the social forces that created instability still remain.

In the years following the U.S. occupation, Haiti struggled to develop an identity as a nation and a civil government. The rural poor were mostly left out of political discussions and benefited little from government expenditures. Race tensions grew

between Haitian-blacks and mulattos. In 1957, Francois Duvalier, also known as Papa Doc, was elected president with strong support from black Haitians and the army. He manipulated the victimized feelings of the Haitian blacks and the continuing racial discord, claiming to be leading a revolution against mulatto power for the “miserable peasant masses.” Six years later he declared himself President-for-Life. This event, typical of Haiti’s sordid history, is just one more example of how those in power continued to abuse and oppress the Haitian populace, further contributing to their victimization. Not only did Duvalier give himself absolute power over the Haitian government and its people, but also he redirected \$500 million to the Duvalier family and more to its supporters. As the Duvaliers grew in power and wealth, the rural poor continued to grow more impoverished.

During the presidency of Francois and later his son Jean-Claude (“Baby Doc”), the Haitian people were oppressed by poverty and military brutality. Rival powers were identified and quickly quashed. Many Haitian people fled the country on boats or migrated to work for slave wages in the Dominican Republic. The United States, attempting to ensure a democratic government, provided aid to the Duvalier government regularly. Money was flowing into the country from the U.S. and other aid providers, but Haiti’s economy was not improving. The corruption of the Duvaliers contributed to Haiti’s continued poverty and dependence on foreign aid. After the death of his father in 1971, Baby Doc ruled until 1986, leaving Haiti only when a mass revolt threatened his safety. Haitians were free from the brutal regime, but the cycle of abuse of the Haitian poor and the trend of military dictatorships was not over.

During the time of oppression, Haitians wanted change. Thousands fled Haiti by boat seeking refuge in the U.S., Canada, and the Bahamas. In 1984, a young Haitian

priest, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, seeing the plight of the Haitian people, began to organize church youth. The grassroots organization of youth grew and eventually led to the expulsion of Baby Doc from the country. Launching the International Year of Youth (IYY) on January 6, 1985, the bishops appealed to young people to “make something of the year, to create a better society, and to count on their support.” Addressing the Council of Youth in April 1985, Bishop Romelus declared, “Enough, people are in chains. It’s time to take the street, to unify. When one suffers, all do.”¹² To consolidate the message and symbolize the exodus, the Church organized youth marches. More than 200,000 young people crossed the country and assembled in Port-au-Prince for peace, justice, participation and democracy praying, singing, and chanting, “Stand up young people! The future of the Haitian churches is in our hands. Let come together to save our country, let be committed to save our country.”¹³ Suddenly a future loomed before them. In November [1985], an obscure anti-government protest again in the city of Gonaives became the focus of national rage when government forces shot and bayoneted three schoolboys. Over the protests of the children’s families, their bodies were buried in an unmarked grave at an undisclosed time, as the regime wished to prevent the children’s funerals from giving rise to popular demonstrations.

The Haitian people have always been willing to fight for freedom from oppression. They had had enough and were ready for change. Yet change has always proved elusive for Haiti, especially when there were so many willing to oppress the masses for their own advantage. Although the Duvaliers were finally out of country, Haitians still struggled against military dictatorships.

¹² *Haiti En Marche* October 1985.

On the bloody Election Day of November 29, 1987, Leslie Manigat was elected president. After only 5 months in office, General Namphy announced that the constitution had been suspended and issued a decree of indefinite military rule in Haiti. Haiti was back under a military dictatorship. The months after Namphy claimed power were violent and brutal. Armed men attacked the church where Father Aristide was celebrating mass in hopes of squashing the strength of the community organizations he supported. The church was burned to the ground and 12 people were killed. Namphy was soon overthrown in protest against the attack on the church and General Prosper Avril took control. Haiti had yet another new leader. A general crisis continued throughout 1989 as citizens went on rotating hunger strikes in solidarity with political prisoners. In 1990, 30 people were arrested and beaten at the Ecumenical Center for Human Rights. The government censored the press and suspended parts of the constitution as they declared a state of siege. General Avril soon fled the country and a 12-member State Council was organized to govern the nation and Ertha Pascal Trouillot was named as provisional president. This government, too, was unable to respond to the needs of the Haitian people. In February of 1991, Aristide was elected as the President of Haiti. After eight months in power, the General Raoul Cedras overthrew Aristide in a coup d'état. Cedras' rise to power is filled with horror stories of murders and harassment by his political army called FRAPPH. President Aristide returned to Haiti in October of 1994, where he served the final 16 months of his term. Haiti was economically drained and traumatized by the violence of the Cedras regime. Aristide dismantled the Haitian military and created a civilian police force in an attempt to stem the violence that terrorized the country.

¹³ Ibid.

When Aristide's term ended and the newly elected Rene Garcia Preval took over the presidency, Haitians should have been celebrating the first peaceful transfer of power since it became an independent nation. The celebrations, however, were subdued. More two-thirds of voters stayed home on Election Day. Preval was the "hand-picked" candidate of President Aristide and won 88% of the votes. Preval passed the sash back to Aristide in February of 2001, becoming the first president to serve a full-term in office without interruption. Aristide returned to the presidency.

Aristide's second term was shadowed by the political, economic, and social problems raging in Haiti. Just as Haiti's government had begun to stabilize, the corruption that had marred the past began to reemerge. Armed militants took control of several of Haiti's major cities in protest of Aristide's presidency. Aristide, just like the other presidents, formed his own army, called "CHIME." In February 2004, Aristide went into exile due to the increasing violence in Haiti's cities by his army and growing international pressure.

Needs Assessment

Into the twentieth century, Haiti's formal politics was marked by the almost complete exclusion of the majority population. The mulatto elite had continued to hold the reins of power until Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, proposing an alliance between the new black middle class and the black masses, won election as president in 1957. Although elected with military backing, Duvalier moved swiftly to create his own armed power base in the form of a presidential militia, dubbed the "Tonton Macoutes." Employing indiscriminate violence against all opposition, whether real, potential, or imagined, Duvalier established a brutal dictatorship. All major institutions, including

political parties, churches, and student associations were crushed or infiltrated and over 30,000 of his opponents were killed. One who survived described the negative effect of the regime: “if you had talent or ambition and wanted to stay in Haiti, you had two alternatives—you could let yourself be totally corrupted or you could be killed. That was it.” Not surprisingly, tens of thousands of educated Haitians chose to go into exile. Despite the brutality, Papa Doc enjoyed the support of the United States of America, which saw him as a valuable ally in its attempt to isolate the socialist revolution in neighboring Cuba.

As we enter the twenty-first century, we discover in the Haitian churches that pastors are copying the same dictatorial behavior that has been bounding in Haitian politics. Increasing numbers of young people are confused and struggling with how to live the Christian faith. Many affirm God as good, loving and forgiving, but only experience God in a negative way. Many adolescents are asking some crucial questions. They wonder: “who and where is God?” and “is there a God?” Living the Christian life seems complicated, unconvincing, and unattractive to these adolescents and the Zoes (a street term used to describe the children of Haitian immigrants) who are a part of the community.

Silence disorder in our community and churches has become a crisis created by the oppressors of the churches. Our adolescents are confused, irritated and upset. The people of Haiti are taking to the boats to exit Haiti due to oppression. Our adolescents are leaving our community, yet they are not heard in the Haitian churches. One of the greatest challenges they are confronting today is their changing world and internal oppression. Most of the Haitian leaders are not equipped; they are not fully aware of adolescent’s developmental issues nor armed with a working knowledge of adolescent culture. For

them they are just invisible. Walt Mueller says: “If we want to reach our kids with the Good News, we must survey our changing surroundings and come to a deep understanding of the world in which they live.”¹⁴ H. Shelton Smith says that:

Religious educators must find a more
Dynamic theology for the emerging age
Or resign them to the inevitable
Eclipse of their movement in the churches.¹⁵

It was 1993 and all through our community in South Florida, not a solution or a lighthouse was found for the development and spiritual guidance for our Nation and for our Haitian children living in South Florida, the “ZOES” (a street term used to describe the children of Haitian immigrants). Then, inspired by God the Almighty, there was erected a solution, Source Of Life Mission Center Inc. (SOLMC), a group of young people who believed through different visions and revelations that there is a solution for the under-development and spiritual life of our community.

During 1980, Miami was evolving into a Latin American gateway. Many Haitian immigrants had arrived to Lemon city, which was renamed Little Haiti. The refugees competed with blacks for many entry-level jobs. This led to tension. In the 1980’s, the area gained prominence as an entry port for drug dealers, their product, and the accompanying money and crime. As a result, the streets of Little Haiti have been flooded with culture shocks, crime and blood.

According to the 2000 census, between 1990 and 2000, the number of Haitians in Miami increased. While the Haitian presence increased, the community has struggled

¹⁴ Walt Mueller, 20.

¹⁵ H. Shelton Smith.

continually to be recognized, have its voice heard and become integrated into South Florida.

Life for Haitians in America has been dominated by different struggles: the struggle against a discriminatory immigration policy and the struggle against ubiquitous anti-Haitian prejudice.

For over forty years, Haitians have been immigrating in significant numbers to America. The original immigrants' children are now adults. The presence of the second generation of Haitians, who refer to themselves as Haitian Americans, is both visible and influential. They are moving into positions of power and influence, especially in the professions as they take advantage of educational opportunities in America. One day, I was over a music studio where I met a Haitian singing star. We were in a conversation when I started to talk to him about Christianity. He replied very impolitely, saying something that not only insulted me, but also encouraged me to investigate. He stated: "Sr. Jacotte! I have known you personally and I have heard a lot of good things about you in the Haitian community. Everyone knows the good job that you are doing with the youth in the community. Now, with all the respect that I have for you, before you come to preach me, you need to keep reaching to your go girls in church." I asked what he meant. He replied: "you need to go and talk to those in church that are dancing nude at those clubs. Today is Thursday, starting tonight I will start having all type of sex fun with them." The star continued talking about our church youth. That became one area of my greatest interest to investigate.

Since I spoke with the star, the words that he said bothered me, especially the way he talked about the Christian youth. I could not sleep nor eat. I called my brother and explained to him what I heard. I also told him about my interest to investigate some of the

nude clubs in Miami. He agreed. I sat with my pastor and requested a favor from him so I could go to three nude clubs in order to investigate the Christian youth. Highly respected, he granted me the favor. The following weekend on Friday morning, I went to the window and asked what is required to enter to the club. The cashier stated, “the club opens from 6:00 PM until 6:00 AM. The entrance is \$5.00. Woman does not pay, but you must come with an 18-year-old man.” I called my brother and told him about the requirements. He agreed to be with me that night.

It was the night of June 6, 2003 at around 9:00 PM, that my brother and I went to the first club in Miami Gardens, called “Gogo girls.” I was very frightened. My brother repeatedly told me in a soft voice, “You need to relax.” Our dress was very different from the others. People were looking at us like we are two criminals. A group was dancing. After a few minutes, they were paid by the spectators and left the scene. Another group comes out. The first girl, who was in the front, was one of a worship team in a church where I usually go and preach. She was a deacon’s daughter. Then came a pastor’s daughter and three other girls from other churches where I usually went to minister. They did not see me. I panicked. I asked my brother to sit closer to the scene, as we were too far away. My brother said, “No, Jacotte.” I insisted and said: “they must see me.” My brother held me down. After their performance, people were putting money everywhere on their body, including their vagina. While they were getting out, I let them see me. My eyes were filled with tears. They stood in front of me NUDE and said: “Manmie Jay, we are sorry. Please don’t tell anyone about our job.” I could not say a word. I was speechless because I did not want to believe my eyes. All I could do was cry and ask God why our youth. My brother saw me crying so much inside the club. He told me that we have to leave now. We left, but I have scars on my soul. I could not sleep all night.

On Sunday morning I went to one of the girl's churches. I just needed to talk to her. Arriving at the church, I sat in the back because I arrived ten minutes after the worship service started. I could not believe my eyes again. One of the same nude girls was leading the worship service and another one was on the pulpit backing up with the worship team. I sat quietly and did not want them to see me. It was too bad that I am well known in my community. Someone sent a note that said "Sr. Jacotte is in the midst of us, please call her to join the pulpit." When they called the pastor for the pastoral prayer, he called me to come and do the pastoral prayer instead. I was frightened, scared, and uncomfortable because I did not want to bother those children. I did not come to church for that. Anyway, wisely I approached the pulpit. The worship back-up automatically left the pulpit and went to the back of the church. The worship leader just could not continue to lead after I prayed. Nicely, I asked her to help her out. She came across to me and started to cry. We held hands and prayed and sought forgiveness and God. I never talked to her about it nor mentioned anything about it. When services were over, I saw the other one crying, I prayed with her and gave both of them my phone number so we can talk about it on a professional level.

Two weeks later, I had to preach to a church in Pompano Beach, Florida. My brother and I went, as we do ministry together. While I was preaching, I saw a fourteen-year-old girl focusing on me. She never lost her focus, though she was crying all along the way. On the altar call, she approached me personally and said: "May I please talk to you after?" I said yes. She was the pastor's niece. Her parents were ready to go, so they called her. She said, "Please, if you can't wait, I'll catch a ride with the pastor." I had a few other people who needed to talk to me, so I told her to sit down and wait. She said to me, "I want to be the last one." I said, "Fine." Her turn came, she approached me, and handed

me a bag. Deep within myself I was wondering, “what is this?” But I did not say a word. She had her head down and could not look at me. She was crying. I took her and went to a little room with her where we could really talk while my brother was talking to the pastor. Inside the bag was \$5,000. In shock, I asked her, “where did you get this money?” She spent 30 minutes just crying and never said a word. Being a therapist, I let her cry. I rubbed her back and encouraged her to express her feelings. She opened up and said: “Manmie Jacotte, I have been a drug dealer since I was nine years old from my school yard.” She handed me two cell phones while she was talking. “My parents and nobody in my church know about it. I am an A student. I never skipped school, and I distribute drugs to the other children in the school. They all know, if they ever say a word, they would not live, just like my bosses told me. I have been trying for the longest time to talk or to bring the subject up in the church. Nobody wants to talk to me. Today, the Holy Spirit touches me and I feel that you are someone I could trust and talk to. I am tired with the life style. I am sexually active. I already had two abortions. I smoke and I am a gang member. I tried to get out of the drugs. My boss said that he will kill me if I leave them. But I am tired. Can you please help me, rescue me?” than she handed a paper that said:” Help my words are few, if you don’t help me I don’t have a chance, because nobody understands me!” WOW! I was sweaty, shocked, but very calm. My first thing is what to do with the money because I don’t want it. The child’s parents were about to lose their home. Suddenly someone was knocking on the door. The pastor asked if I was okay, and stated: ‘ Sr. Jacotte, who are you with, is that my cousin? Aah . . . don’t worry about her, that is a lost case. She will never change. People don’t have time for this type of thing. We are about to ship her back to Haiti. She is a delinquent, she is no good, and she is bad.” Then he told her, “Shut up! Just let the servant go home. She has better things than

you to do. Look at your face, who is going to believe you? All you need is a good butt whipping. You will get it in Haiti by next week.” The poor child was looking at me like her savior. I was being torn between the two, while deep inside I was assessing the pastor’s attitude toward that needy child.

Being troubled, in turmoil, upset and sad, all that I could do was pray and cry while that child was waiting for an answer. I spent many sleepless nights thinking about the Haitian American youth and their needs socially/spiritually.

For Haitian’s, family is fundamental. Haitians put family first and they define family as the large extended family, including distant cousins and sometimes people who are not actually related by kinship. Nevertheless, the Haitian community is not a unified force, except when confronted by extreme pervasive prejudice, such as when the FDA refused to accept blood donations from anyone of Haitian descent. The Haitian youth have a loose sense and even weaker identification with their community. They speak in abstract terms of potential impact, not in the concrete specifics of what the Haitian community means to them.

Social

Frequently, others think that all Haitians are alike. Since Haiti is such a poor country, everyone within it must be poor. In Haiti, we have different classes. Unlike the U.S. where racial and ethnic differences are often noted, in Haiti everyone is well aware of class. The understanding of the bourgeoisie in Haiti is common and everyone is well aware of its implications. Haitian society has always been riven by class differences and those divisions were carried with Haitians to the United States.

Many individuals from the bourgeoisie class are leaders in the Haitian community. They are the ones with the education and skills to run organizations. Many of them have a genuine commitment to helping the Haitian working class, but because of the history of class divisions they are still not trusted. Once all Haitians in the United States were united. This was the incident when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned blood donations from anyone of Haitian descent. At that time, both bourgeoisie and working class Haitians felt attacked and rallied to protest and successfully engage the American political system and bureaucracy to reverse the decision. After that everyone retreated to concerns of their family and church and engaged little in the problems of the majority of Haitians in Miami.

Immigrants

The first port of call for most Haitians has been Miami, Florida. Some have been rejected by all possible havens and, for countless others, their first and last voyage has ended in the icy depths of the Caribbean Sea. Since 1970, about eighty thousand Haitians have sought refuge in America. They have neither been well received, nor easily understood. They have been imprisoned, exploited and neglected by the American government.

Haitians have been routinely detained in abandoned military camps or rounded up and held, awaiting possible deportation. Throughout the Reagan years, Haitian immigrants were the victims of a cruel and almost vindictive federal policy. In 1981, President Reagan ordered that the Coast Guard interdict all Haitian vessels traveling in the waters between Haiti and the United States. Coast Guard captains were empowered to interview and determine the justice of the individual's pleas for asylum. They were

further empowered to return any suspicious claimants to Haiti to their certain punishment and possible deaths.

For those who have been granted asylum or have been allowed to slip into the mainstream of America, the social and economic picture has often been bleak. The United States Government has not been supportive of Haitians. Where Cuba's boat people received a welcome and government and community aid, Haitian boat people have received disdain and prejudice. Haitian refugees have lived in packing crate camps and crowded two and three families in a one-family apartment while Cuban refugees have had American sponsored government agencies to house them. For Haitian refugees, there has been little difference between the horrors of Haiti and the horrors of the United States.

School is an important issue for our youth in the Haitian community. Schools are the sole most intensive, prolonged continuous social institution for our youths. In the 1980's, the schools were called upon to address the peculiar needs of recently arrived Haitians. The school board tried to respond to the particular needs of the Haitian community and since then they have made significant strides. In the schools now, there are more teachers and other personnel who speak Creole. Nevertheless, there is a significant gap between the needs of Haitian parents and students and the available resources. Haitian parents always emphasized the needs for a Creole translator to be available for meetings.

The Church's philosophy is totally different between the Haitian Haitians and the Haitian Americans. The Haitian philosophy is "God, Country and Work," while the Haitian Americans connect the Bible and their social reality to put "body and Heart" together. During the mid-90's pastors represented the last big hope for the Haitian community because Haitians are extremely religious. For many, church is the sole extra-

familial social contact. The Haitian Protestant churches are more concerned about their followers' spiritual lives than their material lives. They have a traditional faith: they believe in saving souls. Life in this world is not important and the worse life is on earth, the better it will be in heaven. There is a lot of discrimination against the Haitian American youth for the way they look, dress, talk and act. Those children are not welcome in their congregations.

There is major problem in the Haitian community today. On every street corner of Little Haiti, one can find at least three churches. If there is a storefront for rent, a church is the first to make an offer. This is an institution that has been doing a lot of ordination. But the saddest part is that most of those trainees are not ready nor equipped to pastor a church, nor do they have any training on how to deal with the Haitian American children. Some pastors have Creole-language radio and television programs for the community. Most of the services in the churches are conducted in Creole, so the Haitian Haitians' children start to come to church with their parents in their childhood. Once they reach their adolescent years, they exit either to black American churches or to the secular world. Haitian American children are left out of their churches. Haitian youth understand and usually prefer to communicate in English. Their problem is the reverse of their parents. They become frustrated, particularly in church, because only a few of the pastors can deliver sermons that meld the two languages. Once these youth reach their adolescent years, they exit either to an English-speaking church or they just stop going completely. At that time it has become a loss for our community.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

There are many different views about the extent to which the literature review should be used in guiding qualitative research. The literature review approach for this study is the critical examination of selective research about the exodus of Haitian youth. The researcher explored Haiti's history and culture, population, language, family system, discipline, government, migration patterns, general adolescent development and Haitian adolescent development.

Haitian Culture

Haitians are from the island of Haiti, which was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492. He named it Hispaniola, meaning Little Spain. It was called Haiti (*Ayiti*), meaning "mountainous," by the Arawaks, the first inhabitants of the island. It has an area of 227,500 sq. km. (10714 sq. mi.), about the size of Maryland. Situated between Cuba and Puerto Rico, Haiti is on the largest island of the Caribbean, sharing its eastern border with the Dominican Republic.

On January 1, 1804, Haiti broke the chain of slavery and gained its independence from France. The French plantation owners were removed. They were replaced by generals of the indigenous Haitian army who ruled mercilessly.¹⁶ Agricultural workers were entrapped in a semi-feudal system. The peasants were exploited by big landowners and terrorized by the section chief of police. Their coffee fields served as the primary source to fill government coffers and as sole guarantor of all government debt payments

¹⁶ A. Louis-Juste, "Popular education and democracy." *Roots*, 2 (1) (1995): 14– 19.

between 1826 and 1932.¹⁷ These conditions did not prevent peasants from rising up against the injustices and exploitation, as evidenced in the uprising of the Goman movement in 1820, Acau in 1880, and the peasant movement of Jean Rabel.¹⁸ Thus, Haitians became known as freedom fighters.

The People

Haiti has a population of about seven million, whose skin colors are of various shades, ranging from light to dark. This is due to the mix of Indians going back to the time before Columbus, Europeans, and Africans. Haitian societal identity has always been shaped by a sharp class stratification and color consciousness.¹⁹ Haitian independence from France in 1804 freed the island from the colonialist, but it did not resolve the division between the descendants of French colonists and African slaves on the one hand and the core of the population, who were largely of African descent and culture on the other.

Dominant Language and Dialect

There are two official languages in Haiti: French and Creole. Creole was designated as the official language in the 1987 Haitian constitution. However, since the beginning of the Duvalier regime in 1957, Creole has been an unofficially accepted language in the internal affairs of the Haitian government.²⁰ Creole is the national

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ M. Labelle, *Social class and color ideologies in Haiti* (Montreal: Les presses de l'universite de Montreal, 1988).

²⁰ Louis-Juste, "Popular education and democracy."

language spoken by 100% of the population whereas French is spoken by 10% of the population.

Family System

The family system is predominantly nuclear and extended. This extended family structure includes consanguine and affinal relatives, meaning blood relatives as well as in-laws. They may all live under the same roof. The family deals with all aspects of a person's life, including counseling, education, crises, marriages and churches. The head of the household is commonly a man. Family decisions are made by all adult males and the family unit is commonly referred to as patriarchal. However, women appear to make many of the major family decisions. The men choose to believe they are running the show.²¹

Children are valued because they are perceived as the key to the family's progeny, cultural beliefs and values. Children are often not rejected, regardless of parental union. Society supports all children. Unfortunately, there is no government subsidy to support children born in poor families or single parent families. There are no governmental laws to force men to care for their children. Children without acknowledged fathers will carry the name of the mother. Sometimes, the two parental families get together and decide that both will be responsible for the financial well being of the child and rearing the child, even without union of the parents.²²

²¹ F. A. Rasanbleman, *Worldwide congress for the international year of the woman* (Montreal, Canada: Les Presses de l'Universite de Montreal, 1976).

²² C. Charles, "A Panorama of Haitian Culture" (Miami, FL: University of Miami, School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, 1978).

Child Rearing Practices

Traditional Haitian culture promotes independence for children. Both boys and girls are expected to be competent, self-reliant, self-sufficient, and high achievers, i.e. “Sa ki lan men ou se li ki pa ou” (What’s in your hand is what you have); education can never be taken away. They are expected to be obedient, wise, and respectful of parents, teachers, neighbors, elders and pastors. Although Haitian children are expected to achieve self-sufficiency and competence at an early age, they are socialized to see themselves as subordinates within the family unit. It is expected that they will be unquestionably obedient to parents, older kin, neighbors, religious leaders and all adults.²³ Children are not expected to express their opinion. In fact, they are not expected to have an opinion because they do not have enough life experience. The differences between boys’ and girls’ experiences will be discussed later in more detail.

Respect of elders is a significant issue. When a child is disrespectful to his or her elders, it is believed that his or her future will be marred by misfortune. This phenomenon is termed *Madichon*. A respectful attitude is demonstrated by bowing the head and avoiding eye contact. If a child makes eye contact, it is seen as a challenge to the adult. In extreme cases of disobedience, uncontrollable behavior, violation of family rules and non-acceptance of family rules, there have been acknowledged cases of adolescents being

²³ C. Charles, “A Panorama of Haitian Culture” (Miami, FL: University of Miami, School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, 1978); L. Desantis “Childrearing beliefs and practices of Cuban and Haitian parents: Implications for nurses.” In *Proceedings of the tenth annual transcultural nursing conference*, ed. M.A. Carter (Salt Lake City, UT: Transcultural Nursing Society, 1985), 54-79; L. Desantis and J. Thomas, “Health education and the immigrant Haitian mother: Cultural insights for community health nurses.” *Public Health Nursing*, 9. (1992): 87-96.

ejected from the family unity.²⁴ Respect of elders is believed to be the key to a successful future.

The male figure is at the center of Haitian life; thus, the education of boys is significantly different from that of girls. Boys are given more freedom and are even expected to receive outside initiation into social and sexual life.²⁵ In preparation for the male role, boys may go out alone; there is little or no control on their whereabouts. The family is more tolerant of behavioral variation in boys.

Girls are primarily educated toward marriage and respectability. Their social relationships are closely supervised. Girls are not permitted to go on a chaperoned date until they are about twenty-one. Any mistakes and/or mishaps, such as “premature” sexual activity, may be a threat to the girl’s future and may blemish the family’s prestige. It is not surprising to find unmarried older women still dependent on their families and still chaperoned on dates.²⁶ Among the majority in the rural indigent areas, young girls are allowed more freedom to socialize with the opposite sex. However, the reasons for this less restrictive behavior usually surround economic constraints within the family. The young girl may be looked upon as a source of generating income and security for the family. The young girl is strongly advised to accept an older, mature and financially stable man as sexual partner. In return, he takes care of meeting the family’s economic needs.

²⁴ Charles, “Panorama of Haitian Culture”; Michel S. Laguerre, *American Odyssey; Haitians in New York* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²⁵ Charles, “Panorama of Haitian Culture”; J. Colin and G. Paperwalla, “Haitians,” in *Culture and Nursing Care: A pocket guide*, eds. J. G. Lipson, S. L. Dibble, and P.A. Minarik, 139-154. San Francisco, CA: University of California, San Francisco Nursing Press, 1996).

²⁶ Charles, “Panorama of Haitian Culture.”

Discipline

Corporal punishment is an accepted and frequent method of discipline in Haiti. Haitian parents believe that they have a responsibility to nurture, protect, support, and guide their children. Corporal punishment is seen as an effective way to implement the parenting role. When Haitians migrated to the U.S., they often felt lost and incapable of implementing their parenting role because of laws protecting children from physical punishment at the hands of their parents, primarily the father. They sometimes expressed feelings of losing control, insecurity about their method of discipline and lack of resources to properly guide their children.

Haitian parents are very authoritative. Their authoritarian ways are challenged in this society. They perceive American society as too permissive and they feel powerless in understanding how to raise their children within the Haitian tradition on American soil. Literature on the issue of parent-child relationships reveals that, in Haiti, most children assist their parents by fulfilling the tasks assigned to them in the house. In the U.S., children no longer abide by this rule. They do not feel obliged to assist their parents in the house-tasks nor to perform any task. Because most parents rely on the children for their adaptation and adjustment in their host society, they often do not argue with their children. These parents are intimidated by their children who are living according to the American culture. For example, the children can call the police on them and take them to court. Or they may decide to leave their parent's home. Physical punishment is considered child abuse in America. Fear of their children being taken away from them if they openly discuss their method of discipline usually causes the parents to withdraw or not follow through on health care appointments. They fear that body marks will be found and they

will then be in a difficult position with the authorities. Haitian parents need to be educated about the American discipline system and child protection laws so that they can negotiate ways of parenting that include caring, nurturing, guiding, and educating their children without compromising their beliefs or violating U.S. laws.

Teenagers' believe in controlling their own budgets and threaten their parents with leaving home if the latter insist on asking them for a portion of the money they earn.²⁷ If the children are born in America or if they come to the U.S. when they are young, they identify themselves with American culture and resist the rules of their parents. Other differences of opinion between Haitian immigrant parents and their children can be found in their use of language and interaction. Most children of Haitian immigrants speak English and bring American friends home while their parents speak Haitian Creole and tend to have Haitian friends.²⁸

Cultural conflicts between children of Haitian immigrants and their parents show many aspects of incompatibility. For example, the parents speak of Haiti and hope to go back home one day, while the children believe in staying in America and refuse to adopt their parents' ideas. These children are afraid of living in poverty under the authoritarian life and under political and economic instability in Haiti.

Training for social autonomy within the parameters of strict obedience and subordination to others in authority is a prime goal of Haitian parenting.²⁹ This restrictive approach to child rearing poses a great dilemma for Haitian children and adolescents.

²⁷ Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, 76.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ M. D. Alvarez and F. Murray, *Socialization for scarcity: Child feeding beliefs and practices in a Haitian village* (Port-Au-Prince, Haiti: United States Agency for International Development, 1981); Charles, "Panorama of Haitian Culture"; Desantis, "Childrearing beliefs and practices."

They find themselves living in two worlds: the American world, which allows and supports self-actualization and individuality versus the Haitian world, which promotes silence, respect, and obedience. Parents see obedience and subordination as methods that will assist the child adolescent in becoming self-reliant, sufficient and competent.

Religious Beliefs

Concerning religious beliefs, although most Haitians profess either Catholic or Protestant Christianity, Voodoo is the main religion of the Haitian population in Haiti. Voodoo involves all aspects of life, political and day-to-day life. Voodoo is associated with politics and economic success. This religious belief is related to most aspects of Haitian's life and it provides hope to its believers.³⁰ In the U.S., most Haitians are not free to practice Voodoo and they find this hard. To adapt in the U.S., they replace Voodoo with other religions or they stay home and become emotionally tormented.

Even if Haitians do not practice Voodoo, this religious belief remains in their minds. Voodoo practices and ceremonies are part of the underlying Haitian cultural cognitive values that remain in Haitians' minds after migration, according to Mintz's and Price's perception of cultural survival or retention theory.³¹ Voodoo ceremonies involve possession by spirits and animal sacrifices, such as in its healing cults:

. . . Shamans perform complex healing rituals which sometimes involve possession by spirits and animals sacrifices that range from

³⁰ Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti The Duvaliers And Their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 1; Melville F. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: Octagon Books, 1964), 177.

³¹ Sydney W. Mintz, and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992).

a few dollars to several hundred dollars, depending on time, effort and resources required to produce the cure.³²

We find a similar description of Voodoo ceremonies in the writings of Akknab, Herskovits and Metraux.³³ Most of my Haitian brother and sister informants who agreed to talk to me about Voodoo provided similar descriptions and usually discussed Voodoo scenarios with joy and excitement.

The description of Voodoo by Haitians who have practiced it reveals that many of its ceremonies, including entering trance states, dancing around fires and conducting blood sacrifice ceremonies, have remained in their minds and have constituted their memories. This implies that many Haitians who live in the U.S. miss practicing Voodoo rituals and would like to practice Voodoo if given freedom to do so. Voodoo is practiced in some part of the U.S., such as in New York City.³⁴ Yet, Voodoo practitioners do not have the freedom to act as they would in Haiti, since the media often portray their activities negatively.³⁵ Some Voodoo practitioners go back to Haiti to attend Voodoo family rituals every year on a regular basis. When they cannot afford to do so due to economic or other reasons, they send their participation to Haiti in money.³⁶

When given the opportunity to discuss Voodoo in the open, Haitian immigrants will recall memories and interpret the Voodoo ceremonies to adapt to this culture.

³² Jeannine Coreil, "Allocation of Family Resources From Health Care in Rural Haiti." *Social science and Medicine* 17.11 (1983): 711.

³³ Melville F. and Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny; among the Buss Negroes of Dutch Guina* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1934); and Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Oxford, 1959).

³⁴ Laguerre, *American Odyssey*.

³⁵ Selden Rodaman, *Haiti: the Black Republic; the complete Story and Guide* (New York: Devin-Adai Co., 1976).

³⁶ Laguerre, *American Odyssey*.

Reinterpretation of religious practices from African religious beliefs by slaves resulted in Voodoo practices.³⁷ A second reinterpretation of this African religious heritage might be the reinterpretation of Voodoo in U.S. society by Haitian Voodooists. In terms of cultural survival theory, underlying cultural values and interpretation of culture, there is an intention to examine aspects of Voodoo practiced by Haitian immigrants in Miami to see how they may have maintained the memories, how they may have interpreted these cultural values to adapt to the U.S., how Haitian immigrants deal with Voodoo practices and what might be the impact of Voodoo religious beliefs on Haitian American youth. I assume that Voodoo affects families' beliefs and youth's lives either positively or negatively.

Religion and Coping

The use of religion is a type of coping resource that has been identified in the literature as quite important to many people for widely varying reasons. Researchers have found that individuals turn to religion under stress for a variety of reasons, including: (1) as a source for emotional support and esteem leading to feelings of belongingness, togetherness, being loved, cared for, and esteemed;³⁸ (2) as a mean for positive

³⁷ Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*; Herskovits *Rebel Destiny*.

³⁸ S. C. Carver "Assessing coping strategies: a theoretically based approach." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, (1989): 267-283; Georges Eugene Fouron, "Patterns Of Adaptation Of Haitian Immigrants Of The 1970's In New York City" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, Teachers College, 1985); E. W. Gordon and L. D. Song. "Variations in the experience of resilience: belief systems and religion." In *Educational resilience in inner-city America: challenges and prospects*, eds. M. Wang and E. W. Gordon (Hillsale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994), 27-42; R. R. McCrae, "Situational determinants of coping responses: Loss, threat, and challenge." *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 54, (1984): 919-928; S. Prudent, "The grief associate with immigration: an examination of Haitian immigrants' psychological adjustment to the United States." (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1988).

reinterpretation and growth;³⁹ (3) as a source for instrumental support⁴⁰ and (4) as a coping strategy when a situation is perceived as uncontrollable and threatening.⁴¹

A number of studies have shown that religious beliefs, practices, socialization and relationships are commonly involved in the process of dealing with stressful life experiences.⁴² Brown and Gary examined the role of the Black church as an agent of socialization among African Americans. Results indicated that religious affiliation was a strong predictor of educational achievement.

In a study of the role of religion in the exodus of the Haitian American youths, Gordon and Song noted that religious beliefs were strongly associated with achievement against odds favoring failure.⁴³ They observed that more than half of their participants reported having followed strong religious beliefs that provided anchorage and stability in the face of challenging and stressful experiences. Most subjects revealed belief in a deity who was beyond what was available to humans. In an analysis of their findings, these investigators concluded that even though beliefs in one's self (e.g., self-concept, self-

³⁹ Carver, "Assessing coping strategies"; Gordon and Song, "Variations in the Experience of Resilience."

⁴⁰ Rose Marie Cassagnol Chierici, *Demelle Making It: Migration and adaptation Among Haitian Boat People in the United States* (New York: AMS Press, 1991).

⁴¹ McCrae, "Situational determinants of coping responses"; K. R. Parkes, "Coping in stressful episodes. The role of individual differences, environment factors, and situational characteristics." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, (1986): 1277-1292.

⁴² D. R. Brown and L. E. Gary, "Religious socialization and educational attainment among African Americans: An empirical assessment." *Journal Of Negro Education*, 60 (1991): 411-426; K. Conway, "Coping with the stress of medical problems among Black and white elderly." *International Journal of Aging and human Development*, 21, (1985-1986): 39-48; G. H. Koenig, L. K. George, and I. C. Sigler, "The use of religion and other emotion-regulating coping strategies among older adults." *Gerontologist*, 2, (1988): 303-310; R. R. McCrae and P. T. Costa, "Personality, coping and coping effectiveness in adult sample." *Journal of Personality*, (1986): 285-305; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

⁴³ Gordon and Song, "Variations in the Experience of Resilience."

efficacy, self-esteem, etc.) are important, a belief system that extends beyond the self may, both internally and externally, influence the exodus process as well.

Previous studies⁴⁴ investigating the role of religion in the coping of Haitian immigrants have also pointed to religious attendance and importance as playing protective roles in the coping process among adult Haitians. Chierici studied the role of the church in the adaptation and coping patterns of a group of Haitian boat people who had settled in a farm in Rochester.⁴⁵ Chierici noted that most of the participants were affiliated with a community church from which they report having received both emotional and instrumental support, such as health care.⁴⁶

Prudent examined the role of the church as a social support resource for the Haitian adolescents who were experiencing feelings of loneliness, culture shock, social alienation, and cultural conflict due to loss of emotional and instrumental support from family networks. Prudent conceptualized stress as grief for the loss of the homeland and family network system.⁴⁷ It was predicted that grief and psychological distress would be lower when a social network was available in the U.S. "Availability of social support network" was operationalized as frequency of church attendance in the U.S. Results indicated that the higher the frequency of church attendance, the lower the experience of grief and separation from the native country.

⁴⁴ Rose-Marie Cassagnol Chierici, *Demelle*; Fouron, "Patterns of Adaptation"; S. Prudent, "The grief associated with immigration: an examination of Haitian immigrants' psychological adjustment to the United States" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1988).

⁴⁵ Chierici, *Demelle*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Prudent, "The grief associated with immigration."

Fouron added another variable in this study. He examined the role of a Haitian community church in moderating the effect of stress on a group of older Haitian immigrants (ethnic social support). Stress was operationalized as feelings of alienation, loneliness, anxiety and nostalgia due to social alienation and cultural conflict. Participants included adult immigrants who had adopted a separation style of acculturation because of a perception of racial discrimination. Fouron reported that the Haitian community church played a very important role in the coping of this group of alienated immigrants by reducing the stress associated with social isolation, rejection and alienation these individuals were experiencing.⁴⁸

The concept of a coping resource as conceptualized in these studies seems to emphasize the importance of interpersonal transactions that provide a sense of community, fellowship, and emotional support which leads to feelings of belongingness, being loved, and cared for. Studies across various lines of research have documented the protective function of religion in the coping of both adult and adolescent populations across diverse risk conditions.⁴⁹ However, to date, no study was found that examined the contribution of religion in the coping of young Haitian American youths.

⁴⁸ Fouron, "Patterns of Adaptation."

⁴⁹ E. Anderson, "Neighborhood effects on teen-age pregnancy." In *The Urban Underclass*, eds. C. Jencks and P. E. Peterson (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 1991), 375-398; Brown and Gary, "Religious Socialization"; D. Scott-Jones, "Adolescent childbearing: Risks and resilience." *Education and Urban Society*, 24, (1991): 53-54.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

*“For our country, for our forefathers, united let us march.
 Let there be no traitors in our ranks!
 Let us be masters our soil.
 Unite let us march
 For our country, for our forefathers.”⁵⁰*

Relentless and accelerating change in our culture and communities requires equally relentless pursuit of ideas and systems that can address our problems and questions even faster than they emerge. The basic idea of the author is to discover (find and share), think about (reframe, refine) and solve the problems of the massive exodus of the Haitian American youths in the Haitian churches.

Throughout our whole life, we encounter stories. whether we are kids, teens, adults, and even seniors. When we are children, we love to hear stories from our parents before we go to sleep. When we are in elementary school, we are keen on listening to stories from our teachers. When we are teens, we want to learn stories from our friends and parents in order to know more about them. When we are adults, we prefer to listen to stories from successful people to learn how they succeeded in their careers. When we are seniors, we love to listen to stories from our grandchildren. At any age, we love to watch television and films to learn stories through actors and actresses, though we might have forecast their story lines. Story has created our community, culture and identity and story is an integral part of our life. The Bible joins the theme of liberation and Christian vocation in the more ample context of story telling. The Bible urbanized and introduced a

new, yet old, teaching genre, explicitly helpful in working with children, youths, adults and blacks in their struggles to experience themselves as a whole. This approach links stories and biblical images with the exigencies of everyday black experience.

In reframing, the story of the Haitian American youth will help us comprehend the reasons for their exodus. Just like when we have difficulties in comprehending abstract ideas, we can understand them through stories. Even when we are dealing with Scriptures, some of the ideas would be too abstract to comprehend; therefore, preachers use stories to help explain the ideas clearly. When we look at the Bible, seventy-five percent is narrative.⁵¹ Besides, the Bible is not a list of doctrines, a confessional statement, a systematic theology, or an index; instead the Bible is a book of illustrations.⁵² When we look at the prophet Nathan, we see that he guided and taught King David by a story. When we look at Jesus, we see He proclaimed the Kingdom of God in terms of parables and stories. The Bible shows that the people of God are a story-formed community.

Using stories of the Haitian American youths in our document for the transformation of the Haitian churches has an honorable place. Chrysostom, Augustine and Ambrose used stories in the fourth and fifth centuries. One characteristic of medieval preaching was the use of exempla. Even in the thirteen-century, Francis of Assisi, Dominic and their friars also used stories. They included Bible stories, anecdotes from

⁵⁰ Haitian national anthem, *La Dessalinienne*, written by Justin Lherisson and Nicolas Geffrad in 1904.

⁵¹ Tom A. Steffen, *Reconnecting God's Story to Ministry: Cross-cultural Story Telling at Home and Abroad* (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 1996), 123.

⁵² Michael Dudit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 199.

classical literature, historical examples, legends of the saints, animal fables and lessons from nature. In the twentieth century, Martin Marty said that if he had to edit the eleventh volume of new theology, it would be “Story and Theology.”⁵³ Modern theologians⁵⁴ stress the importance of using stories, and many good theologians and evangelist have used stories to nurture their listeners. Story has the power to order life meaningfully. Lowry quotes four people’s ideas upon story so that we can fully understand the significance of story:

Says Wicker: “the story gives a coherent shape to what would otherwise be a Jumble of miscellaneous, unintelligible items.” Or as Stephen Crites would suggest: “Consciousness is created by story, and not story by consciousness” Laurens Van Der Post said: Without a story of you own to live you haven’t got a life of your own.” Lonnie D. Kliever added, “Stories have the power to shape life because they formally embody the shape of life.”⁵⁵

We live in a time when the participation and involvement of the Haitian American youth is shrinking. This has led to the massive exodus of the Haitian American youth. Throughout history, the term, “adolescence,” has been associated with problems. It is discussed everyday and everywhere: in the family, in the government, and in the Church. Young people are a source of perennial interest and continuing conversation. Socrates wrote of them in fourth century B.C., “They have execrable manners, flaunt authority, and have no respect for their elders. What kind of awful creatures will they become when they grow up?”

⁵³ Richard A. Jensen, *Telling the story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 123.

⁵⁴ Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching; Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 148.

⁵⁵ Eugene L. Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship between Narrative and Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 39.

Every society must somehow transform children into adults, for its very survival depends on that transition. Youth work has emerged out of the need to address the numerous problems facing youth and to assist young people toward personal, social, and spiritual development. This discussion examines the conditions constituting the Haitian American adolescent problems throughout the Diaspora and offers youth workers, pastors, elders and lay leaders solutions to alleviate teen suffering and to guide them in their searches for identity and also to reduce their exodus. Leaders of the church are facing real challenges. They need to hear the stories of the experiences of the youth in their midst. True stories of the Haitian American youth are to encourage and inspire the lay leaders because the theology underneath the stories is real, tangible, feasible and practical.

The vast majority of the Haitian American youth stories are likewise. The fact is that most of our Haitian pastors follow the same principle of dictatorship and oppression of Haiti's past and present history, so, broadly the stories are the same. The functioning of some of the pastors in spiritual offices has been a source of confusion and division among the Haitian assemblies. Primarily, this has resulted from a lack of understanding of what their offices are and how they function in the church. The problem is the fact that a worldly form of government had been brought into a spiritual church. Most assemblies of Haitian believers today have departed from the Scriptural model of church government and have taken a worldly form of government. Some, through study of the Scriptures, have modified their form of government to include elements of the Scriptural model, but few have wholly embraced the Scriptural model of church government. The carnal type of government in most churches is such that it has changed the very nature of the church meetings. Rather than being a meeting where every member functions in some

manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the leading of the Holy Spirit is restricted and smothered by the church government so that only a few officials may manifest the Holy Spirit.

I realize that many church leaders will have trouble recognizing this because they feel fulfilled in what they are doing. Furthermore, many church leaders feel that they try to get the youth involved, but that the youth just do not want to cooperate. From my 17 years of experience in the Haitian church, I can say that, for me, there was no problem with the life being there inside of me. The leading of the Holy Spirit and my desire was more than adequate. The problem is that the government of the church inhibited me from functioning in fullness because it is patterned after the world system and not after the teachings of Scripture. It is also patterned on power. Sure, there were many things that I was allowed to do. Teaching Sunday School, teaching Youth meetings, leading prayer meetings, organizing fellowship activities, and visiting at prisons were part of my activities. Furthermore, I was the minister of education for one of the Haitian churches. Nevertheless, being faithful in all these things only matured me into hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit clearly, and it actually furthered the dichotomy between church government and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Our century has seen such a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit that few can deny it. The result has been a change in the way many Haitian American churches function. The new life of the youth now gushes forth in many churches. Nevertheless, I am concerned that many believers either grow themselves right out of fitting into the church, or else they limit their responsiveness to the beckoning of the Spirit to things that fit within the framework of the established government.

Many Haitian American youths hop from church to church. After a few years at one church, they feel they are not growing anymore and, because they do not have a voice

in that assembly, they go to another church in the community. There are many churches from which to choose, each emphasizing different teachings, different methods of worship, or different spiritual gifts. Some of the youth, either before or after several cycles of church hopping, decide to leave church altogether. Others decide to stick it out and be faithful regardless of how they feel or what happens. Christians who decide to leave the church cannot grow further in the Lord to lead a fully balanced Christian life because it is the church, not an individual believer, that is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). However, neither can those believers who remain in such a congregation grow toward a fully balanced and mature life in Christ, because the form of government inhibits such growth. The Haitian Churches need to implement the proper form of government so as to allow all the members to function through manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Before examining youth problems and solutions, it is important to define briefly the concept of “youth.” Youth are defined in many ways and in different contexts worldwide, confounding politicians, administrators, policy planners, youth workers, and academicians alike. Boubakar Ly points out that “there is more than one way to be a young person. Youth is relative, and different cultures see it differently. The wisest line is to take up a fairly pragmatic position and to adopt the view of the society in which the young person lives.”⁵⁶ This means that young people are those whom society regards as such. Generally the period between childhood and adulthood is called “youth.”

A youth is regarded as a young person who can initiate and innovate a number of activities to accelerate the development of his or her society—youth are legally defined to

⁵⁶ Boubakar Ly (1979)

include all persons within age range of 15 to 25 in most United Nations bodies and Commonwealth agencies. However, for political purposes, the range is widened to cover those from 10 to 35 years of age. In Haiti, youth is defined as between 15 to 35 years. Adolescence is known as a transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood. Many psychologists agree that adolescence begins around ages 12 or 13 and ends in the late teens or early twenties. Diane Papulua says, “It is easier to determine when childhood ends than decide when adulthood has arrived.”⁵⁷

In order to define clearly the problems of youth, it is necessary to understand their needs. Adolescence is the period during which a young person learns who he or she is and what he or she really feels. To Erikson it is “the search for something and somebody to be true to.”⁵⁸ It is difficult for a youngster to learn about oneself even in the best circumstances; it is even harder in unstable living conditions. A host of needs may be discerned for adolescents as a group. Among the psychosocial needs of young adolescents, there are three of particular importance:

- The fundamental need to establish a personal identity.
- The need to establish significant associations with other people.
- The need to develop skills, attitudes, and understanding necessary for adulthood.

The years of youth linking childhood and adulthood are characterized by the individual forming a basic understanding and impression of the world and developing the

⁵⁷ Diane E. Papulua (1983) notes

⁵⁸ Erikson.

skills (emotional, intellectual, and physical) to adequately cope with it. Thus, the young person seeks his or her place in the Haitian churches as an adult.

Haitian American youth all over the Diaspora face serious problems from their churches. However, the exodus of the youth in the Haitian churches is described as pathetic. The Haitian American churches are a youthful community. Nearly two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 15 to 35. They constitute a very important part of our community. Haitian American youths suffer the same oppressions and afflictions that affect the rest of Haitian society; however, certain problems are peculiar to the youth. These issues are discussed daily, but no significant action is taken.

The present status of Haitian American youth emerges from the churches' leadership, country, economic, demographic, social, cultural, and educational changes of the past century. The status of the youth has profound consequences for the kind and quality of relationships existing between generations. Haitian American youth of today are like much of the world's youth in that they are not integrated into Haitian society; they do not always feel at home within it and often encounter difficulties while navigating through it. In this regard, Kwaku Osei advances:

The youth today are growing up in an increasingly urban, technological society characterized in part by shifting values and traditions. Broad physical, social, psychological, economic, and family changes all have serious consequences for the youth. Thus, young people are forced not only to adjust to their individual changes but also simultaneously to meet the societal and family expectations.⁵⁹

The distinguishing characteristic of Haitian American youth is that they are not integrated into their own population; they are maladjusted to their society, to their

⁵⁹ Kwaku Osei 1989

community and even worse to their churches. It is noteworthy that Haitian churches are characterized by neo-colonial and imperialist domination, so the social system in which the young people now live is unacceptable to them. Generational conflict is deeply rooted in the Haitian churches. Much has been said and written about the rebellious youth of today: how their values, attitudes, and lifestyles diverge from those of their Christian parents or their generation. Their activities are characterized by what is generally called “youth culture.” Contemporary youth are drifting toward a world of private and personal satisfaction, and they find their parents and Christian leaders increasingly irrelevant as role models, especially when they are looking at the oppressive dictatorship that their parents and leaders have been followed.

Some problems instigated by Haitian American youth include delinquency, rioting, murder, fleeing from law enforcement, assault, robbery, malicious damage, begging, home breaking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and prostitution. However, Haitian American youth also face some social problems for which they are not responsible: poor Christian education and training facilities, poor church recreation and leisure facilities, insufficient shelter, spiritual maltreatment, broken homes, and unstable families. Most of these Haitian American problems can be traced to the poor economic situation, lack of education from the leaders, negligence of church leadership, irrelevance of church curriculum, social disorder, political instability, cultural indifference, and spiritual darkness.

Cecile D. Gaoton, the director of “Christian Children Funds” in Haiti describes the pathetic situation of the Haitian American youth as follows (translated from French text):

The Haitian youth of today have certainly many tares. In that sense they are the product of our system and as well as its main victims. For the most part, they have not been granted their minimum chances that would enable them to develop their abilities, to receive training, to acquire knowledge and skills . . . A high percentage of our youth, therefore, have never had the opportunity to attend a church business meeting. Among those who have been admitted to the meeting, more than three-fourths exit the Haitian churches, due to silence disorder in their midst.⁶⁰

This statement accurately describes Haitian American youth today. Pushed out youth frequently leave churches without a good understanding of the gospel. The youth get discouraged, feeling excluded and rejected by the lay leaders. In our Haitian churches, the Haitian American youth face critical problems with the lay leaders. They have no voice, they are oppressed and they are under a strong dictatorship. Evidence of the gravity of the Haitian youth exiting the Haitian churches lies with the young men and women who are attending the nude clubs and the others who are doing drugs. In the churches, the youth face critical social and spiritual problems. They are desperate for the chance to live their lives consistently in the churches with their values. While we continue to push for change, others feel helpless, hopeless, alienated; and are frustrated.

Solutions To Haitian Youth Problems

The problems confronting the Haitian American youth underscore the problems of Haiti since slavery as a whole and reflect the general well-being and prospects of society and lay leaders. The problems of Haitian American youth are inseparable from Haitian societal problems. Haitian American youths are integral to Haitian society. Many solutions for the Haitian American youth can be found within a new paradigm in the churches. There is no single solution for Haitian American youth problems; all aspects of

⁶⁰Cecile D. Gaeton.

societal life must be addressed (sociological, cultural, economical, structural, and political, spiritual).

Remember Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches are on the decline. Therefore, we are in crisis. The signs of the crisis are expressed in lack of leadership, internal oppression, dictatorship, silence disorder, and social and economic factors. As a result, the youth are exiting. No one can doubt that most of our youth these days are in trouble in the Haitian churches. The roots of the problems are the linguistic problems, the approach of lay leaders, the church government, the internal oppression, the silence disorder, the challenge and the power. The youth's desires are often categorized as the product of immature minds; their legitimate dreams are frequently ignored by some of the leaders. Their voices are not heard, they are not accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and a massive exodus is on its way. A primary key to solving their problems lies with the quality and effectiveness of the educational structure of the lay leaders. There should be concern for relevance and practical application in the curricula, a greater emphasis on how to solve problems rather than just transmitting accumulated information, and how to break the silence disorder.

Youth training centers should be established with particular emphasis on rural youth. For example, there should be training in farming, animal husbandry, construction, carpentry, metalworking, home economics, and cooking. Training programs should focus on all forms of development economic, social, technical, political, individual, and spiritual. If youth can live successfully life in their rural communities, they will not migrate to the urban areas. Haitian young people should have the opportunity to discover their true identity and develop all aspects of their personality.

The challenge of the Haitian churches is to join the struggle of the Haitian American youth throughout the Diaspora and to reshape the clay by transforming their minds in confronting their original oppressor, which is America.

In this paper the author views the “exodus” metaphor in three different interrelated categories: Biblically, theologically and historically. (a) Biblically, the stories of the Haitian American youth serve as powerful example and ideal for the struggle of the 21st century youth exiting the Haitian American churches and community. Having diagnosed the illness, its symptom and its causes, now the Haitian American youth refuse to let the virus of silence eradicate their lives, their families, their churches and their community. The Gospel of grace has freed us not only from legitimate oppressors but also from their law. We then call the Haitian American youth to rediscover the God who created freedom and who wants us to enjoy it legitimately. In him, we are set free to walk in humility (not humiliation) and dignity (not dirt); (b) theologically, the author perceives the exodus of the Haitian American youth as a bell to emphasize the importance of setting free, liberation. The author chose Exodus 6:6 as a text because it is a text much used in contemporary liberation theology. Our intention is not yet to engage in a liberation exegesis. Our goal is to establish a broad theological and thematic exegesis on Exodus 6:6 so that a motif of prime theological importance is brought at the surface. (c) Historically, we will offer what reframing considers the need of revision, deconstruct to reconstruct. We will offer a new wine as a new paradigm for reconciliation. We will revise the history of America in Haiti as our yet enemy of freedom.

The Biblical witness

Periodically, historians' survey opinions as to what is the most influential event of all time. In recent decades, the Industrial Revolution has often appeared at the top of the list. For the politically oriented, not uncommonly the French Revolution wins; for Marxists, the Russian Revolution. Christians often point to the life and death of Jesus as the single most important event of history. For Muslims, Mohammed's revelations and his hegira [exile, 622 CE] have a similar transcendental authority. Today, the exodus of the Haitian American Youth from the Haitian churches throughout the Diaspora has joined the list. During the time of the Israelite people, the Exodus not only formed the people of Israel into a nation, it also shaped the Jewish people's image of God as the God of History. Over and over in Jewish liturgy, reference is made to the Exodus from Egypt and to "God who has brought us from the house of bondage." In comparison to that in the Haitian liturgy, reference is also made "God heard our cries."

Historically the Exodus of the Haitian people transformed the Haitian American youth just like it transformed the Jewish people and their ethic. The Ten Commandments open with the words, "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."⁶¹ Having no other God means giving no absolute status to other forms of divinity or to any human value that demands absolute commitment. Neither money nor power, neither economic nor political system, has the right to demand absolute loyalty. All human claims are relative in the presence of God. This is the key to democracy. Exodus morality meant giving justice to the weak and the poor. Honest weights and measures, interest-free loans to the poor, leaving part of the crops in the field for the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, treating the alien stranger as a native citizen--

⁶¹ Exodus 20:2, NIV

these are all applications of the Exodus principle to living in this world. Thus, the Exodus, as articulated at Sinai, transformed the Jewish people and their religious ethical system. In as much as Christianity and Islam adopted the Exodus at their core, most of the Haitian American youth is profoundly shaped by the after effects of the Exodus event.

In modern times, the image of redemption has proven to be the most powerful of all. The rise of productivity and affluence has heightened expectations of the better life. Conceptions of Haitian American adolescent freedom carry the same message: “do not accept disadvantage or suffering as your fate; rather, let the world be transformed!” By now, some of the Haitian pastors are so suffused with the vision of their own authority that any revolutionary spark sets off huge conflagrations. In a way, humane socialism is a secularized version of the Exodus’ final triumph. The liberator is dialectical materialism and the slaves are the proletariats, but the model and the goal are the same. Indeed, directly revived images of the Exodus play as powerful a role as Marxism does in worldwide revolutionary expectations. In South America, the theology of liberation directly touches the hundreds of millions who strive to overcome their poverty. The secret of the impact of the Exodus is that it does not present itself as ancient history, a one-time event. Since the key way to remember the Exodus is reenactment, the event offers itself as an ongoing experience in human history. As free people relive the Exodus, it turns memory into moral dynamic. The experience of slavery that breaks and crushes slaves does not destroy free people. It evokes feelings of repulsion and determination to help others escape that state. As the youth struggle more in the Diaspora and in the churches, they remember the heartbreaking tale and the death of their people in Haiti and at sea on a daily basis. They remember the racism that they face daily as they struggle in their jobs, their schools, humiliation and housing discriminations, . They also remember that slavery

gradually conditions people to accept servitude as the norm. The Israelites fell into that trap and were delivered, not by their own merit, but by the power of the mighty hands. The lesson is that a slave needs help to get started on liberation.

In the Haitian ritual, the family acts as the transmitter of memory. The past is not excised but becomes an active part of the lives of the participants. Parents tell the story to children. At the same time, the children are not merely dependent. They must become involved for it is essential that they join in the unfinished work of liberation. This is why when Pharaoh offered to let the adult Jews leave Egypt to worship God if the children were left behind, Moses rejected the offer, and “With our youth and our elders we will go.” The Haitian ritual is deliberately designed to hold the children’s attention, to fascinate them with their people’s history so that they will feel impelled to take up the covenantal task. Thus, by the magic of shared values and shared story, the Exodus is not some ancient event, however important, it is the ever-recurring redemption. It is the event from ancient times that is occurring today; it is the past and future redemption of humanity. The Exodus is the most influential historical event of all time because it did not happen once, but recurs whenever people open up and enter into the event.

Influence of Culture

When millions of black slaves from west Africa were taken to the Americas, their beliefs and practices were reborn under various forms and names: Candomblé in Brazil, Santería in Cuba, Obeah in Jamaica, the Shango cult in Trinidad, and Voodoo in Haiti. In Haiti, as in the other colonies, the plantation owners tried to eradicate the slaves’ memory of their family, lineage, and origins. The various ethnic groups were systematically split up and dispatched to different plantations. The slaves were given new

names and they were forcibly baptized as Catholics. In spite of this, the slaves held on to their cultural and religious traditions. They invoked and celebrated their ancestral spirits in secret, using worship of the Catholic saints and the Church sacraments and holidays as a screen. Slowly, a new religion evolved, giving the slaves a sense of identity and hope. The French colonists correctly saw the new religion as a focus of resistance to and a rejection of Christian and white supremacy, and tried, without success, to stamp it out. In August 1791, a group of slaves met to plan an uprising. They held a Voodoo ceremony in the forest at Bois Caiman where they sealed a sacred pact, swearing to die rather than live under the misery of the slave system. The participants at the Bois Caiman ceremony returned to their plantations, and, a week later, a slave rebellion began, quickly spreading across the whole colony. The rebellion became a revolution, and, over the course of twelve years, the half million black slaves fought and defeated the armies of France, Spain, and Britain. Slavery was abolished, and, in 1804, Haiti became the world's first black republic.

A small group of merchants and the top officers from the revolutionary army emerged as a ruling elite based in the country's coastal towns. This elite looked to France and to Catholicism for its cultural and religious identity, but the majority of the population, living as peasant farmers in the interior, developed a way of life and a system of beliefs drawing on African traditions. Although most Haitians believed in Voodoo, Catholicism was made the official religion of Haiti in 1860. Since then, the Church and the government have carried out repeated "anti-superstition" campaigns, destroying temples, burning religious objects, and imprisoning Voodoo priests. Because of the repression, Voodoo has had to exist as a semi-underground religion. Ceremonies usually take place at night, and, in towns, the temples are hidden away between the corridors and

densely packed shacks of the slum areas. The practice and beliefs of Voodoo are shrouded with a veil of mystery and secrecy as a necessary means of self-defense. It also survives thanks to its ability to coexist with Catholicism. It is perfectly possible to be a Voodooist and a Catholic at the same time. In fact, as Haitians, we say that you can't serve the spirits unless you are a Catholic.

Since the 1980s, the Catholic Church has grown more accommodating and has abandoned its former line of outright opposition. Many progressive Catholic priests see Voodoo as an important cultural element in Haitian society. The new Constitution, adopted in 1987, guaranteed the freedom to practice any religion, and in 1991 President Aristide met with a delegation of Voodoo priests in the National Palace. However, the Voodooists feel that there is a growing threat from the evangelical Protestant missionary churches, many from the US, who campaign aggressively to get Haitians to reject Voodoo. Voodoo is a religion with priests, a society of the faithful, temples, altars, ceremonies, and finally a whole oral tradition by means of which the essential elements of worship have been transmitted. Yet, it has never been codified in writing, never possessed a national institutional structure, a national church, an orthodoxy, a seminary, a hymnal, a hierarchy, or a charter. For this reason, it is hard for non-believers to pin down exactly what Voodoo is.

The Voodoo culture, like any other culture, has a language of all its own. It is the language of spirit origin, the language of the sign and symbol. Symbology and colors are very important in voodoo culture and they are in relation to the Bible. God has woven throughout the Bible numerous symbols and colors, each revealing characteristics and shades of meaning. Just like one cannot understand the language of the Bible without understanding the symbolic language, it is the same in voodoo.

Table 1. Symbolic Colors.

SYMBOL	INTERPRETATION BIBLICAL	SCRIPTURES	INTERPRETATION VOODOIST
Amber	The glory of God	Eze 1:4; 8:2	Loua Soleil
<i>Black</i>	Sin , death, famine	La 4:8; Jer 8:21; Rev 6:5	Loua Guede, Baron Samedi
<i>Blue</i>	Heaven, heavenly, authority, from above, Holy Spirit	Nu 15:38; Jn 14:26	Erzulie d'Antor
<i>Crimson</i>	Blood atonement, sacrifice or death	Lev 14:52; Jos 2:18, 21; Isa 1:18	Erzulie Freda
<i>Purple</i>	Kinship, royalty	Jdg 8:26, Jn 19:2	Rada
<i>Red</i>	War, bloodshed, death	2Ki 3:22; Rev 6:4; 12:3	Petro
<i>Scarlet</i>	Blood atonement sacrifice	Lev 14:52; Jos 2:18, 21; Isa 1:18	Priest or Bokor wear that color
<i>White</i>	Purity, light, righteousness, holiness of God, Christ,, the angels or saints	Rev 6:2; 7:9; 19:8; 3:4-5; 15:6	Priestess wears it in time of special sacrifice

The belief system of voodoo revolves around family spirits often called loua or MISTE who are inherited through maternal and paternal lines. Loua protect their children from misfortune. In voodoo, there are many loua. Although there is considerable variation among families and regions, there are generally two groups of loua, the rada and the petro. The rada spirits are mostly seen as “sweet” loua, while the petro are seen as “bitter” because they are more demanding of their children. Rada spirits appear to be of African origin while petro sprits appear to be of Haitian origin. Loua are usually anthropomorphic and have distinct identities. They can be good, evil, capricious,, or demanding. Loua most commonly show their displeasure by making people sick and, of course, voodoo is used

to diagnose and treat illnesses. Loua are not nature spirits and they do not make crops grow or bring rain. The loua of one family have no claim over members of other families and they cannot protect or harm them. The voodooist is therefore not interested in the loua of other families.



Figure 1. Loua Possession Ceremony.

Loua appear to family members in dreams and, more dramatically, through trances. We believe that loua are capable of temporarily taking over the bodies of their children. Men and women enter trances during which they assume the traits of particular loua. People in a trances feel giddy and usually remember nothing after they return to a normal state of consciousness. When you are possessed with the spirit, it temporarily replaces your personality. Possession trances occur usually during rituals such as services

for loua or a voodoo dance in honor of the loua. When loua appear to entranced people, they may bring warnings or explanations for the causes of illnesses or misfortune. Loua often engage the crowd around them through flirtation, jokes or accusations. In the picture above (Figure 1), you see a woman possessed.

Music is a manifestation of culture, like language, which changes. Music in the Bible is both emotive and fluidly connected to language. Yet Scripture strongly indicates the role of music in life and ministry, even apart from the function of the propositional word.⁶² The beauty of skillful music itself can remind us of the beauty of the Lord. God ordained beauty without utility in worship (Exo 28ff.). In fact, the first person recorded as being filled with the Holy Spirit is not filled to give a verbal message in prophecy or teaching, but to create works of art (Bazelel, Exo 35:30ff.). The Psalmist reminds us, “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth” (50:2). The beauty we perceive in this fallen world is merely a dim reflection of the “perfection of beauty, God.” The Psalter’s term, “Selah,” seems to even indicate times for musical, non-lyrical, expression. Thus, music as a non-verbal art can minister (1Sa 16:15-23) and can reflect the beauty of God (Psa 27:4).

In a voodoo ceremony, drums play a central role and the drummers play ancient rhythms that bring the congregation and the spirits together. The spirits will only come to dance or “ride” the bodies of the faithful in response to the “call” of the drums. Followers of Voodoo, however, who have an awareness that supernatural forces do exist and can be enlisted to bring protection and luck or create illness or bad luck for an enemy generally disapprove of the practice of magic and sorcery. A minority of priests claim to be able to

⁶² Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover, 1992).

harness these powers. It may well be that a knowledge of natural poisons has been passed down the generations. In the opinion of all learned authorities on Voodoo, the prevalence of magic and poisoning in Haiti has been exaggerated out of proportion to the reality by foreign sensation-seekers.

As well as serving Haitians' spiritual needs, Voodoo fulfils other important social functions. The priest is often a source of knowledge and authority in the community and the temple and the ceremonies that take place there provide the space and events around which communal bonds are constructed. Voodoo also contributes massively to Haitians' sense of identity, since from the time of slavery during and after the revolution, it has been a religion of resistance. Despite all the efforts to suppress it, Voodoo has survived and has served as the inspiration for Haiti's rich and varied culture. Voodoo inspires the painting, sequin flags, metal sculpture, roots music, dance, folklore and crafts for which Haiti is world famous.

One of the greatest of the problems that have agitated the Evangelical Haitian Churches is the problem of the relation between culture and Christianity. This problem has appeared first of all in the presence of two tendencies in the Church, the scientific or academic tendency and what may be called the practical tendency. Some Haitian pastors have devoted themselves chiefly to the task of forming right conceptions as to Christianity and its foundations. To them no fact, however trivial, has appeared worthy of neglect; by them truth has been cherished for its own sake, without immediate reference to practical consequences. Some, on the other hand, have emphasized the essential simplicity of the gospel.

Theological view

Liberation

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines liberation as: 1. The act of liberating or the state of being liberated. 2. The act or process of trying to achieve equal rights and status. The motif of “liberation” stands in a firm context when viewed along interrelated themes as one of the central motifs of the exodus text. “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves”⁶³ expresses the heart of the liberation motif in the Exodus tradition. A careful scrutiny of the Exodus text reveals that the idea of “setting free, liberation” is expressed by different Hebrew verb. The word לָאֵן occurs in Ex. 6:6 and 15:15.⁶⁴ This verb has been found to have been used in two contexts: it appears in connection with legal and social life⁶⁵ and with regard to God’s redeeming acts.⁶⁶ The use of לָאֵן emphasizes deliverance from distress by an enemy and release from the obligation of slavery.⁶⁷ We will focus only on these terms.

Gustavo Gutierrez, a chief exponent of Liberation Theology, regards exodus as a political action: “it is the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and comradely society. It is the suppression of

⁶³ Exodus 20:2 NIV

⁶⁴ Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz Zum Hebraischen Alter Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1958), 299.

⁶⁵ Lev. 25:25-34

⁶⁶ G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 351.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 354.

disorder and the creation of a new order.”⁶⁸ Croatto follows the same line of thought when he asks: “Have we ever considered that the first, exemplary, liberation event which reveals the God of Salvation, was political and social?”⁶⁹ J. P. Miranda echoed the same thought when he remarks that the cry of the oppressed in Ex. 3:7-9 indicated an agonized plea from the victim for help in some great injustices.⁷⁰ Liberation Theology, a term first used in 1973 by Gustavo Gutierrez, stressed three reasons for the importance of the exodus event.⁷¹ First, it occupies a central place within the Old Testament. Second, The exodus serves as a unique model for interpretation and reinterpretation throughout the Bible. “The memory of the Exodus pervades the pages of the bible and inspires one to re-read often the Old as well as the New Testaments.”⁷² And third, the exodus tradition has similarities with and hermeneutical possibilities for analogous historical experiences, which the People of God undergo, like that of the Latin American context.⁷³ The exodus of Haitian youth describes the oppression in which the Haitian people lived in the Diaspora, in slavery, repression, alienated work, humiliations, and silence disorder. Jean Bertrand Aristide was influenced by the tenets of liberation theology, which taught that Christians must work for social and economic justice for all people. For the author, liberation theology means criticizing the repressive dictatorship of some leaders in the

⁶⁸ “G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 88.

⁶⁹ S. Croatto, quoted in J. A. Kirk, *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 173.

⁷⁰ J. P. Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), 89.

⁷¹ Kirk, *Liberation Theology*, 147-52.

⁷² Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 90.

⁷³ Ibid.

government and protecting the rights of the unheard, not only in Haiti but throughout the Diaspora.

In August 2004, during an intensive seminar at United Theological Seminary with the theme “Reframing the Dialogue on Racism; Will racism Continue in America.” Dr. Sam Mann, our mentor, made a statement: “White people give up real quick even the good ones. We don’t have to, we can drop out of the race, the struggle. But black people can’t. You go to bed black, wake up black and sleep black. . . . Reframe, we are not talking about picture frame . . . I am talking about a house frame that guides the construction. . . . dialogue is not a lecture, it’s a relationship.” When Dr. Sam said these things, I froze inside. I went into a deep and profound meditation and asked myself to really wake up. If I am really ready to die for the cause, I need to be truthful within myself. I must not let myself be compromised like the former dictators in Haiti such as Duvalier, Cedras and, the worst, Aristide. When Rev. John Mendez spoke about the “Politic of Holiness” that the Liberation Theologian emphasized quite frequently, that drew me to America who always looks at itself as a good, moral and spiritual country. While in contrast, America is the most evil and wicked country on earth. Haiti is in a national crisis. It is actually occupied by America, although it fought and gained its freedom 200 years ago. America is the enemy of our freedom. Their policies towards us are wicked and unjust. Historically, America’s advanced civil and political human rights in Haiti pushed dictators out the door, financially supporting law enforcement and encouraging respect for human rights norms. At the same time, they have also undermined human rights by supporting the very same dictatorships, blocking urgently needed development assistance to democratic governments and inducing politicians to represent their interests over those of Haitian voters. These harmful policies not only

cancel out the positive contributions, they leave poor Haitians more vulnerable to human rights violations than they would be without U.S. intervention. Over the long term, the policies decrease stability in Haiti, frustrate the development of sustainable institutions that support human rights, and undermine the effectiveness of both past and future positive measures.

America is worse than the Egyptian people during the time of Pharaoh. In March 1990, Prosper Avril's ouster led to the first ever-democratic Presidential elections. On September 3, 1991 the "de facto regime" overthrew the elected officials. The ensuing three years were among the bloodiest periods in modern Haitian history with an estimated 5,000 killed, and hundred of thousands tortured, imprisoned, or forced into internal or external exile.⁷⁴ The U.S. condemned the de facto dictatorship quickly and forcefully. It continued to denounce human rights violations throughout the regime and participated in UN sanctions. American troops led the UN-sponsored multinational force that chased the de facto regime from power in September 1994. But alongside these positive efforts, the U.S. also provides moral, financial and other support to the de facto regime and its paramilitary allies. This support certainly prolonged the dictatorship's duration and most likely allowed it to increase its terror.

The most striking example of U.S. conspiracy against human rights was the support for FRAPH, the Revolutionary Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, and its founder Emmanuel Constant. FRAPH was the principal paramilitary ally of the de facto dictatorship. Secretary of State Warren Christopher described it as "a paramilitary organization whose members were responsible for numerous human rights violations in

⁷⁴ Brian Concannon Jr., "Beyond Complimentary: The International Criminal Court and National Prosecutions, a view from Haiti," *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* Vol. 32, n. 1 (2000): 3.

Haiti in 1993 and 1994.”⁷⁵ A less restrained U.S. Embassy cable called FRAPH a group of “gun carrying crazies,” eager to ““use violence against all who oppose it.” Numerous monitors, including the organization of American states, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch documented FRAPH’s multitude of atrocities.⁷⁶ FRAPH targeted Americans as well as Haitians. When president Clinton ordered U.S. troops to lead the multinational force into Haiti, Constant declared: “Each FRAPH man must put down one American soldier.”⁷⁷ Despite his public animosity towards the U.S., Constant was in fact a paid CIA operative who regularly met with U.S. officials, some of whom encouraged his activities.⁷⁸

The U.S. protected Constant from the Haitian justice system. When an investigating judge invited him in for questioning, Constant fled to the U.S. Under pressure from Haitian officials, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) commenced deportation proceedings. The State Department publicly intervened in support of the move. Warren Christopher wrote a letter to the Court explaining that due to his terrorist activities in Haiti, Constant’s “presence and activities in the united States have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences . . .” The judge agreed and added that allowing Constant to remain in the United States fosters the impression that the United states endorses FRAPH and its actions.⁷⁹ The judge ordered Constant deported

⁷⁵ John F. Gossart Jr., U.S. Immigration Judge, “Memorandum of Decision and Order in the matter of Emmanuel Constant,” Case #A 74 002 009, September 1, 1995.

⁷⁶ William J. Aceves, *United States of America: A Safe Heaven for Torturers* (New York: Amnesty International USA Publications, 2002), 33.

⁷⁷ David Graham, “Giving the Devil His Due,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 2001): 62.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 64-66.

⁷⁹ Gossart, “Memorandum of Decision, 13-14

in September 1995. Three months later, while his case was on appeal and he was in a detention facility, Constant went on CBS 60 Minutes television program, admitted his relationship with U.S. intelligence officials and hinted that he could divulge more.⁸⁰ Officials quickly offered Constant a deal: he could remain in the U.S., a free man, as long as he checked in regularly and did not talk about what he did in Haiti. A 30-year INS veteran who supervised Constant in detention “cannot understand why Constant is not rotting in a U.S. jail . . . he was just treated differently than any other murderer or terrorist.”⁸¹ With this event, we can make a parallel between Pharaoh and America. Pharaoh’s attempt to exterminate the Hebrew race, by infanticide, is considered to be equivalent to the murder and crime of the American people. American is a threat for the Haitian people. We believe that, just like Pharaoh’s three attempts to influence the course of history—the midwives’ fear of God, the Princess’ compassion, the resourcefulness of Moses—it will fail. In the refusal of the Haitian American youth to co-operate with oppression, the liberation of Haitian bondage will have its beginnings. America is a nation that is destroying other nations for its own good. America is wicked, selfish and very manipulative. Just like Rev. John Mendez said in his speech, “Holiness without compassion baptizes racism; racism consolidates bigotry, circumcises fear; fear nurtures intolerance; intolerance denies guilt; guilt cultivates violence and demonizes our enemies.” America is a nation that continues to invade the poor nations and murder for his righteousness sake. I believe that, just like the woman crossed all the barriers of the purity laws to get to Jesus, the Haitian American youths already glimpse the hope of

⁸⁰ CBS 60 Minutes, December 3, 1995.

⁸¹ Graham, “Giving the Devil His Due,” 68; Susan Benesh, “Haitians trapped by War on Terrorism,” *Amnesty Now*, (Fall 2003), 12-13.

liberation. Their act is a national identity, a slave rejection, a refusal of oppression, and a rejection of church imperialism. James H. Cone stated: “Black preachers reasoned that if God delivered Israel from Pharaoh’s army and Daniel from the lions den, then God will deliver black people from American slavery and oppression.”⁸²

To conclude, the motif of liberation plays a significant role in theological understanding of the exodus of the Haitian American youth. The real crux of this motif, however, is not the process or the act of liberation, but what it should lead to. It definitely has a significant place in the redemptive of God. I believe that the nation of Haiti is God’s possession. God has called us into being for freedom. He will redeem us from oppression and violence just like he did for the nation of Israel. America will soon or later pay the full price, for we know that God always defends the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong. The book of Proverbs says:

“He who is generous to the poor lends to the Lord.”⁸³

“He who oppresses the poor insults his Maker; He who is generous to the needy honors him.”⁸⁴

America Let My People Go! We believe that there is a progressive future that awaits us and it must be demanded by our will. Frederick Douglass said: “if there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both

⁸² James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* Revised (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 51.

⁸³ Proverbs 19:17 NEB

⁸⁴ Proverbs 14:31 NEB

moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Find out what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong, which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted either with words or blows, or with both.”⁸⁵

So far we’ve seen Isaiah’s shocking indictment of the leaders and people of Judah in 1:10, and his alarming announcement concerning their wasted worship in verses 11-16. but now as we considered the truth of verse 17, we find the source of God’s scathing rebuke in previous verses. Here Isaiah declares: *Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.*

In this brief but intense command Isaiah reveals the fuel of God’s fiery denunciation. Here he summarizes both the expectation and failure of God’s people in three areas that were foundational for their relationship with Him and each other. Because of the activities taking place in the Haitian churches, Haitian American youth could of have grasped the urgency of these commands. We cannot appreciate the level of God’s expectation unless we examine some of those verses.

In Isaiah’s writings the concept of justice was supported by at least three key principles. The first was that God expected justice to be firmly grounded upon moral standards of right and wrong that flowed out of His character. In Isaiah 5:20, He scolded Judah for replacing good with evil; light with darkness, and sweetness with bitterness. The accusation applied to several sinful areas. Isaiah’s prophetic contemporaries, Micah and Amos, addressed the same issues in both Judah and Israel (Mic. 3:2-11; Amos 5:7-

⁸⁵ Frederick Douglass, “No Progress Without Struggle,” in Floyd B. Barbour ed. *The Black Power Revolt* (New York: Collier Books, 1968), 36-37.

15). Together they reveal a justice system that had redefined God's standards of right and wrong.

In the book of Isaiah, we see that he continued with three additional commands that logically flow out of God's concern for justice. Whenever justice fails, there are victims, and the following commands focus on the needs of those victims. The next command called the leaders and people to encourage the oppressed or "relieve the oppressed", KJV. When Isaiah relayed this mandate, he could have had at least two different groups of oppressed people in mind. The first group was the poor who had been abused by the rich. He rebuked the leaders of Judah for plundering and crushing the poor (3:14-15).

The final two commands of verse 17 further illustrate God's loving focus on those who were supposed to be served by justice. Through Isaiah God directs the people of Judah to defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

God's focus on these two groups orphans and widows demonstrates both His concern for them and their particular plight during the time of Isaiah. When God established His principles of justice, they included the concept of individual rights. Each individual in Judah was due fair treatment and protection.

If we go back beyond Isaiah into Judah's history, we see the broad picture behind Judah and Isaiah's day. The Scriptures reveal that God is just in His very being. God's throne is pictured as having justice in its foundation (Psalms 89:14). King David declared that God loves justice (11:7). The Bible also reveals that all justice ultimately flows from God (Deut. 1:17). He is a just God and any injustice goes against His nature. When we look at some of the Haitian churches' behavior toward the Haitian American youths, we should have viewed a living illustration of God's love and compassion in each of their

life. Instead we viewed: shameless, internal oppression, and dictatorship to mention these. The Israelites were suffering under the bondage of Egyptian slavery. They cried out to God for deliverance. God heard their cries and was intimately concerned for them (Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7). Just like He commissioned Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom, we as an Haitian woman feel the same calling for the Haitian American youth to get out of their boundaries. We believed that dramatically the voice of the Haitian American youths will be heard.

Historical Foundation

Often it most is difficult to accept our fact. Such acceptance means to say “yes” to that which is our own bill of particulars. . . . It means being very specific about us. This is our face, not another’s; it will always be our face exhibiting a countenance that reveals all the laughter and all the tears of our years of living. . . . No substitute can be found for it-go wherever we will, knock at every door, our face remains our face.

— Howard Thurman⁸⁶

Haiti is a deceived nation. We are deceived by our government, by our values, by our culture and, what is worse, by our churches. The Haitian American youth must maintain their eternal and their earthly perspectives in order to overcome this deception. We are expecting from God prosperity, healing, success, power and spiritual destiny. Yet, we need to never lose sight of our focus, which is liberation. Social transformation is a must in our midst for we are the victims of systemic oppression. Young says, “The transformation and liberation of the human condition cannot take place apart from the participation of God and individuals in social action. God’s role is not to violate human

freedom in the quest for liberation. Victims of systemic oppression must claim freedom by maximizing efforts toward social transformation.”⁸⁷

In the dance of history, Haiti always makes history. In order for Haiti to be liberated from the French revolution, they had to focus. While focusing, they used voodoo, a part of Haitian culture, as one of their weapons. It was the only successful slave revolt west of the Atlantic. Its result was the first independent black republic in the Western Hemisphere. Two hundred years ago, in the midst of Haiti, there was a battle for independence. Today, within the Diaspora, there is a battle for the souls of the Haitian American youth in the midst of our Haitian churches. If we go back in history, it is the same trend of oppression that some of the lay leaders follow. In America, they feel comfortable and at ease, although they are being yet oppressed. In their comfort zone, they swim in it, they eat whatsoever is given, but what they don't realize is that, when their digestion is over, they are burping what they have been taught and ate. The new generation just refused to swallow it. This new generation wants to be emancipated by the oppressors and they believe that they have to liberate themselves. Haitians usually sing “Liberte se pa bay yo bay sa, se prend yo prend'l.” (Liberty has never been given, but you either have to take it or you seize it). We are willing to help and guide the Haitian American youth to enter and get their freedom and their voice just like Harriet Tubman, as we see some traits of her personalities in ours.

Harriet Tubman was an admired African American hero. We admire her who maintained faith during her trials and tribulations. Through her, we discover the liberation

⁸⁶ Howard Thurman, *The Inward Journey* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986).

⁸⁷ Henry James Young, *Hope in Process: A Theology of Social Pluralism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1991), 129.

mind set and the liberation and vocational strategy that motivated her to persevere.

Harriet Tubman crossed the line for which she had so long dreamed. After years of cruel treatment, she was free. But she kept saying that her heart was still “down in the old cabin quarters with the old folks and my brothers and sisters.”⁸⁸ Motivated by her hunger for justice, she resolved to go back to the South. She prayed to God to help her saying, “Oh, dear Lord, I ain’t got no friend but you. Come to me help, Lord, for I am in trouble!”⁸⁹

Between 1850 and 1860, she was a daring conductor on the Underground Railroad through which she guided more than three hundred slaves, including her parents, to freedom. There was a reward of twelve thousand dollars offered for her in Maryland. It was said that she would probably be burned alive if caught. But this heroine, whom the slaves called Moses, was not deterred from her call to act. And she was never caught.⁹⁰

Once a trip was started, there was no turning back. And if someone got cold feet, the voice of Moses rang in their ear, “Move or die!”⁹¹ She sang to bolster the spirits of her followers, and they joined in the spiritual “Go Down Moses”: “You may hinder me here, but you can’t up there, Let my people go. He sits in the heavens and answers prayer, Let my people go! Oh go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh, Let my people go!” Through faith, a way was made out of no way. God was the Way-Maker and Harriet Tubman followed the Way-maker.

⁸⁸ Sarah Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People* (New York: Corinth, 1961), 31.

⁸⁹ M. W. Taylor, *Harriet Tubman* (New York: Chelsea House, 1991), 39.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

Haiti Is A Race War

If the thought police would allow Black leaders to connect the dots and think outside the box, they would be telling us that people of African ancestry are in the throes of a race war. The thought police, to set the record straight, forbade Blacks from engaging in critical, strategic, analytical and innovative thinking. The fear or inability to think guarantees, at the very least, the maintenance of the status quo.

The bugging of the offices of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; the United States' kidnapping of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; the economic sanctions against Robert Mugabe and his beloved country, Zimbabwe; the genocidal war aimed at Black males in this country, to cite a few examples, are no reasons to sound the alarm if each of these incidents is viewed separately and unrelated to a common thread.

A bipolar relationship exists between descendants of enslaved Africans and descendants of our white oppressors. The corollary of white supremacy is Black subjugation. White supremacy fuses abnormal psychology with racism and eugenics, and white supremacy, to be sure, should not be confused with prejudice and racial hatred.

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and in power. If Haiti had been an island of white indentured servants who had overthrown their white colonial masters and had sided with George Washington and his posse in the American Revolution, giving rise to the Louisiana Purchase, Haiti would still be the recipient of a generous annual stipend from the United States. It would be the top banana in the Western Hemisphere.

White supremacy can only succeed if whites are economically and politically independent and Blacks, as a group, are invariably dependent, economically and

politically. There are no exceptions to this rule. Any other variables would offend white supremacy. This means that Blacks must automatically embrace notions of submission and sell out. It is not a question of adopting the rule of least resistance. There must be no resistance. Compromise and conciliation are intolerable and tactics of confrontation and combat, political and legal, are illegal.

France was the richest country in Europe in the eighteenth century and St. Domingo was the richest colony in the Western Hemisphere. More than one-fifth of France's gross national product came from sugar, coffee and indigo produced by enslaved Africans. When our ancestors stopped financing their own oppression in St. Domingo, France went into an economic nosedive.

This crisis had a devastating effect on the House of Rothschild, which had substantial holdings of French stock. It is not surprising that France, aided and abetted by Britain and the United States, would put Haiti in a headlock after 1804 to save international finance. Haiti would have to cough up 150 million francs, approximately \$22 billion in today's dollars. Haiti is still reeling from this extortion plot.

By 1803, Napoleon was broke. He needed cash. Although the Louisiana Purchase was a bargain, the United States lacked the financial resources to consummate the deal. The investment houses, Barings and Hopes, purchased Louisiana from France and resold it to the United States, with interest, for \$15 million, of which this country deducted \$3.75 million for its claims against France. Nonetheless, France still received 52 million francs, a fraction of Haiti's ransom.

The Haitian economy was booby trapped from its inception. Alexander Hamilton influenced the writing of Haiti's first Constitution. Haiti was initially isolated diplomatically, thanks to Thomas Jefferson, for six decades, and, similarly, this nation

subjected Haiti to a prolonged economic embargo. The U.S. Marines occupied Haiti from 1915 until 1934 while Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a member of the Wilson Administration, was tampering with Haiti's Constitution.

This same recipe is being pursued in Iraq. Historically oppressed groups have never been able to survive and thrive under a constitutional framework written by occupying powers. These governing laws, in Haiti and Iraq, based on the U.S. Constitution, call for cutthroat capitalism. The beneficiaries are the financial minorities who are allied with the occupying forces.

Until Haiti is able to secure reparations and enjoy UN protection from the United States, France and Britain, Haiti will always be a hopelessly international, dependent state. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld describes Haiti as a failed state and, therefore, a threat to the United States. Secretary of State Colin Powell in one of his speeches argues that even though Aristide was democratically elected, he was a flawed political manager. Interestingly, Powell is serving in an unelected regime.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

Design of the Model

**But let me get to the point...
...I'm too alone to be proud
You don't know how it feels to be me**

**So let's get to the point...
Let's head on down the road
There's somewhere I got to go
No, you don't know how it feel to be me
(Song from Tom Petty, 1994)**

The universal cry of the Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches is “You don’t know how it feels to be me in there” For both the Haitian leaders and the Haitian American youth, the teenage years are characterized by confusion and conflict in the Haitian churches. The primary goal of this study was to learn why the Haitian American youth are leaving the Haitian churches. So we can help them to come back and adapt their lifestyle to the Haitian churches in the United States without any conflict with their leaders. Since few studies have looked extensively at Haitian American youth in the Haitian community. The researcher decided to attempt a study that would test some initial hypotheses thru their life stories and provide preliminary data that could be refined.

The design of this phenomenological research study included multiple strategies for collecting data that described the Haitian American youth. These included personal interviews with the youth, attend services at the four main Haitian churches in Miami for observation purposes, (Hosanna Worship Center; Shalom Community Church; Fraternity Baptist Church and Emmanuel Baptist Church) and walked throughout the Haitian community in Miami by conducting interviews with parents, teachers, school

administrators, businessman in the community on socialization in terms of interactions and friendships with the Haitian American youths culture shock and language barrier.

Hearing the life stories of the Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches is very important. Later on children will clamor for them and adults will draw to them for insights and the reminder that every person needs. In this dissertation, the imagination of the leaders will be captivated and carried off to the world of the youth; people will find inspiration, encouragement and instruction on vital truths about how to stop the exodus of the Haitian American youth.

My context associates and others helped to identify the four main churches out of the community and the youths to interview. The participants or informants who will be interviewed and observed in this study include: Parents or caregivers, youths, female and male adults of Haitian background, school teachers and school administrators.

The researcher planned to present to the context associates training on the techniques of in-depth interview. It will be a four hour session explaining the tools. The program needed to be adapted with very limited budgets in mind. The author planned to be the presenter for the training which will be an overview of the study along with a more detailed look at the exodus of the Haitian American youth.

Research Methodologies

Life story telling of the Haitian American youth is explicitly helpful in working at the Haitian churches. It helps us learn the struggles that the youth have to experience in the Christian community. It joins the theme of liberation and Christian vocation in the more ample context of Christian development. It also addresses the issues of the imperative need for liberation in personal. It faithfully relates the reconciling message of

the Bible through story to the persistent human struggle of Haitian American. Finally it shares the hope of the biblical vision of the beloved community as it can be realized through transformation and social reconstruction.

This chapter will explain in detail that process key component which is the interview. The Haitian American youth has the most to gain from the interview; therefore they are the best and most productive interviewer. We will interview as many youth as possible and training others to do likewise.

The life of a Haitian American youth is not easy in the Diaspora. We hope their craft will enlighten the community. Their stories and voices need to be heard, whether it's to teach a moral, present an idea, embolden a cause or to validate life's struggles. It is clear that there is little variance in the perceptions and depictions of youth over the generations. There are various authors who depict adolescence as a stage of development in which sensuality, excess, and turbulence prevail in one form or another.

The Interviews

The exodus of the Haitian American adolescents is as series of life story experiences telling interviews conducted with Haitian American youths in the Diaspora, parents and leaders in the community. Some of the Haitian American youths were interviewed one-on-one by the author and the context associates. The one-on-one interviews were recorded with audiotape. The phone interviews were recorded by taking notes. The parents, community elicit and the leaders were interviewed on one-on-one.

Why Haitian American youths?

The portraits of adolescents in the Bible are not like those of our national heroes, in which only their achievements and virtues are mentioned. The Bible paints a rounded picture, with adolescents' strong and weak points, their achievements and failings, their triumphs and their crises. Luke in his gospel describes even this exceptional young person which God chose to be His Son, at a time of tension, confronted with a problem typical of families with adolescents, managing a crisis situation, charged with intense anguish and a sense of disorientation.

Haitian American youths were chosen for interviews because they were those who are exiting the Haitian churches; therefore they are the one who can tell us the reasons why. They are the key characters of the Haitian churches most important stories and because in large, youth tend to tell you exactly what hurts them in storytellers. They can also provide a great deal of information rich data which in turn provide an understanding of church conflicts. Everyone has something to say about the Haitian youth. Some experts say culture shock is to blame. Some teachers say it's all about a lack of respect for others with the Haitian American children. Some parents say peer pressure is another culprit. But what do the Haitian youth themselves say?

As the exodus among of the Haitian American youth has become an increasingly concerning issue in the Diaspora and given the purpose of this study, which is to uncover the reasons for the exodus of the Haitian American youth, this type of story telling life experiences in the Haitian churches was essential in gathering data and capturing the essence of these adolescents' experiences. More than ever the voices of the Haitian American youth need to be heard, respected and acted upon. Upon agreeing to participate, confidentiality was discussed and important in this study. A sense of ownership was

important to them and stimulated them to be more participative and open to sharing their stories.

There was one in-depth interview either face to face, or by phone or thru e-mail which each participant over a two months period. A semi structured interview process was used to elicit all the information required for the participants. This approach allowed the participants the freedom to explain a situation of their own, and to illustrate concepts. The purpose was for the adolescent to recollect of experiences by asking them to tell and describe their experiences as Haitian adolescents in the Haitian churches. They were asked to use the language that was most comfortable to them, English, French, or Creole, in explaining and or telling their stories.

Interviews were conducting in a setting that they choose. The participant and I discussed the need to conduct the interview in an environment that was private and comfortable. The site selections were mutually agreed to. Thus they were either at my house, in a restaurant, church office or in a library. They were reassured and guaranteed the confidentiality of the information provided. Eventually the tapes and the transcripts will be destroyed.

A conversational tone was established during the interview. Initially demographic data descriptive of the participants were collected. In all instances the participants were comfortable and at ease in sharing their life experiences stories. They readily talked, told their stories that described incidents in the churches, treatment that they received from the congregation in general, and the pressure that they had to take and gave examples of their experiences. Four of the participants choose to communicate in Creole, none of them communicate in French. The interviews generally lasted from 40 to 45 minutes.

At the conclusion of each interview, field notes were prepared. These notes were written as soon as I could after completing the interview. Field notes are a written account of the thing that the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting or reflecting on data in qualitative study (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1982).

The interview conducted at the youth center church office was held in a small conference room without air conditioning. There was a noisy fan which we chose to turn off after a while. The overall atmosphere at the center was lively because there were other youth activities taking place, for example there was a choral group singing. The two participants were members of the choral group, and they were siblings. Field notes were recorded at the end of each interview.

Subsequently the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The interviews conducted in English were easily transcribed. The interviews conducted in Creole took much more time to transcribe. Throughout the transcription of the translated interview, I was very conscious of the need to bracket my own beliefs and views about the phenomenon by temporarily suspending and holding them in abeyance. This allowed me to objectively transcribe the data and use the correct words to convey the participant's experience. This was a genuine attempt on my part to ensure that the data collected are authentic and are not the interpretation of the researcher.

RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The unit of analysis comprises Haitian-Haitian and Haitian American youths who are and exit the Haitian churches and community. The youths can be initiative writers, high school students, organizational leaders and university students. The Haitian American youths are the appropriate unit of analysis for one reason. The other interviewers can be parents, care-givers, principals, businessmen not to forget to the four main Haitian American churches that we attended. We are studying the strategic behavior of human actors. Humans act and react.

We expand the regional focus and include Haitian American youths from New York, Canada, Boston, Miami, Atlanta, and Providence who were actively involved in the Haitian churches up to the year 2004. The participants sample was solicited by word of mouth contact with friends and through Haitian adolescent youth group. The researcher limited her interviews to include individuals who were actively involved in the Haitian churches. However, in some cases, youths who actively involve in the Haitian churches are welcome. This did not disqualify them from my research population. I limited the time scope for a variety of reasons. Individual who exit the Haitian churches is very difficult to locate. Some of them are deceased, and in the rare cases where I could locate them. In addition I wanted to look at more recent cases. Finally because I am using in-depth interviews to gather data, I needed to keep the data set manageable.

Source of Life Ministry Team for the Doctoral Study identifies 60 main churches located across: New York(1) Rev. Jacques Honore, Eglise de Dieu de Brooklyn , Canada (1) Dr. Moricette Georges, 1ere Eglise de Dieu de Montreal; Boston (1) Rev. Dr. Noel;

1ere Eglise de Dieu de Boston; Atlanta (1) Rev. St. Hilaire Eglise De Dieu d'Atlanta;
Providence (1) Rev. Jackie 1ere Eglise de Dieu de Providence and Miami (55);

NAME

CHURCH

[REDACTED]	Baptiste de la Fondation Church
[REDACTED]	Baptiste de Lumiere
[REDACTED]	Baptiste Eden
[REDACTED]	Bethany Baptist Church
[REDACTED]	Bethel Baptist Church
[REDACTED]	Bethesda Community
[REDACTED]	Chretienne de Mahanaim
[REDACTED]	Christian Faith Tabernaculo
[REDACTED]	Cornerstone Baptist
[REDACTED]	D'Apocolypse
[REDACTED]	Divinity Baptist
[REDACTED]	Eglise Evangelique Mitspa
[REDACTED]	Emmanuel Haitian
[REDACTED]	Emmanuel Haitian
[REDACTED]	Evangelique
[REDACTED]	First Guilgal Baptist
[REDACTED]	First Haitian North Miami Beach
[REDACTED]	Galilee
[REDACTED]	Galilee
[REDACTED]	Grace Baptist of N. Miami
[REDACTED]	La Vraie Eglise de Jesus Christ
[REDACTED]	Mahalaleel Evangelical
[REDACTED]	Mistpa Baptist Church
[REDACTED]	Mt. Zion
[REDACTED]	New Hope Christian Church
[REDACTED]	New Hope Worship Center
[REDACTED]	New Maranatha
[REDACTED]	Philadelphia Baptist
[REDACTED]	Primitive
[REDACTED]	Redemption Evangelical
[REDACTED]	Rhema Baptist
[REDACTED]	Rocher D'Horeb
[REDACTED]	Schekinah
[REDACTED]	Shalom Baptist Church
[REDACTED]	Source de Vie
[REDACTED]	South Miami Haitian Baptsite
[REDACTED]	Temoin Pour Christ
[REDACTED]	Terre Promise
[REDACTED]	Trinity Evangelical
[REDACTED]	Un Seul Dieu
[REDACTED]	Hosanna Worship Center
[REDACTED]	Shalom Community Church
[REDACTED]	Eglise Baptiste De la Fraternite
[REDACTED]	Eglise De Dieu de Siloe

We attempt to contact the leader from each church. We supplement that data by including youths that were active between 1998-2004. In total we were able to identify 71 youths in our research population and 25 parents, school administrator, businessmen in the Haitian community. From this population, we were able to conduct 45 in-depth interviews with the youth and 25 interviews with parents, care givers, teachers, school administrator.

Participants

The participants were grouped into the following categories:

Youth 17-30

Parents and/or Care Givers

Female or Male adults of Haitian backgrounds

School teachers and school administrator

Observation of 4 main Haitian American churches

The participants provided information and were part of this study. In the home setting, participants included parents or caregivers, youths, children, and adults of Haitian background. These informants were observed and interviewed about issues related to Haitian American youth in the Haitian community. These informants were asked to present their opinions and share their experiences with the Haitian American youth. The criteria for selecting the targeted population included the following. The duration of household members and child's stay in the host society, socioeconomic class of the parents or the caregivers, youth's age, area of residence, types of households the child or the children live and the formal education of parents or caregivers. From 96 people I talked to, the targeted population of more than 70 participants from various sites was finally selected. Seventy one youth were selected. However, The participants were a convenience sample of forty five (45) Haitian American Youths. 10 community leaders that include: 5 teachers, 1 High school Principal, 8 Businessmen, and 11 parents. Four

main churches in Miami were observed: Hosanna Worship Center, Shalom Community Church, Fraternity Baptist Church, and Emmanuel Baptist Church. On the youth there were 21 males and 24 females. The age break-down was as follows: Five 17 year old boys, (two had been in the U.S. for three years, and the other was born-American); six 19 to 21 year old boys (one had been in the U.S. for ten years, the rest second-generation); ten 23-30 year old men (four had been in the U.S. for the past ten years, the rest was second generation); six 17 year old girls (two had been in the U.S. for six years and the other second-generation); six 19 year old girls (two from Haiti and the rest second-generation) eight 19-21 girls (three first generation, five second-generation) and ten 23-30 year old girls (2 first-generation, the rest second-generation).s, administrators, and businessmen) in the community. Youth Participants were enrolled in public school grades or university. the sample included 45 first generation (Haitian-born) and 51 second generation (U.S. born). The participant sample was solicited by word of mouth, contact with friends and through Haitian American churches. The participants attended their last year of High school, Universities and some are college graduated. The observation of the churches were important to this study, since it is my observation that Haitian churches are having conflict and not meeting the needs of the Haitian American youth. Given the purpose of this study which is the cause for the exodus of the Haitian American youth from the Haitian churches, this type of observation environment was essential in gathering data and capturing the essence of these adolescent's experiences.

Our sample only includes 45 young individuals. Although we could have conducted more interviews, and in fact, more than 45 individuals responded to our requests for interviews, we purposefully selected individuals we felt would shed the most light on our research question. Some individuals participating in the initiative process

have an inordinate amount of influence. For instance, a credible sample of initiative youths who have dealt with the silence disorder of the church in New York, Boston, and Canada includes such individuals as [REDACTED], [REDACTED] (the famous Gospel Singer of our community), [REDACTED]. Because we felt it was essential to include specific individuals in the sample, we exerted far more effort to contact and schedule interviews with certain subjects. In addition, we purposely selected individuals to include representatives from both categories. 25 parents, school administrators, teachers and businessmen were also interviewed.

Selection criteria and sample for targeted population selection were based on the residential area of the informants, parents or caregivers and it was: (1) Youths who were born in Haiti with a length of residence in the U.S. of at least 3 years (first generation); or were born in U.S. of Haitian immigrants (second generation immigrants). (2) participants were English speakers at various English proficiency and acculturation levels; and youths were affiliated to a Haitian Christian church at some extent. Some churches or congregations and social gathering places are also part of the sites selected to meet with informants. There was no age limit set for parents or caregivers, since parents or caregivers did not constitute the main focus of this study. However, the ages of the youth were very important in this study. The ages of youth targeted population range from seventeen to thirty years old. Religious beliefs of the parents or caregivers turned out to be important in this study because most of them values and prefer to maintain their religious beliefs and want to see their children adopting these values. Socioeconomic class of the parents or caregivers also turned out to be important because in the Haitian communities. Socioeconomic class division is sharp and is highly pronounced according to the literature and according to my experience as an Haitian born. Although language,

skin color, and educational level are among the criteria considered in determining socioeconomic class division in Haitian communities in Haiti and abroad (Laguerre 1984, Stepick 1998), this study did not consider skin color as a criterion in selecting the sample. The socioeconomic classes were determined from informants' views of socioeconomic class since for most informants money alone could not determine class stratification.

Considering socioeconomic class differences, this study helps me more to learn more about my Haitian culture from informants of different socioeconomic classes as they have different experiences in adaptation and adjustment processes. The youth from these socioeconomic classes also have different experiences with the churches in the Diaspora. The youth of the middle socioeconomic class have different sets of problems of cultural differences than the youth of the lower socioeconomic class. According to informant's views youth of middle class households overcome language barriers more easily than their peers of lower socioeconomic status. According to informant's views, and according to my personal observation youth of middle income households have less problems in adaptation and adjustment processes than their peers, youth of lower socioeconomic classes. In this study all youth had a chance to be selected.

Once we selected some individuals for the research population, our sample was no longer a random sample, but a purposive sample or what Warwick and Lininger (1975) call a parallel sample. A parallel sampling method is amenable to a research design that needs data from a small and specific research population.

We made a minimum of three attempts, over a two months period, to contact each individual in area identified. For some of the more important interviews, we made as many as five attempts. We were denied interviews for a variety of reasons. Some individuals had bad memories of their oppression in the Haitian churches, others simply

choose not to participate because they feel that it is a waste of time for the Haitian community. In many cases we were unable to find the addressed or other contact information. In an effort to find some individuals, we asked interviewees for help locating other youths. This approach may raise the concern that the data set reflects “a circle of friends” or a “snowball” sample. This is not the case in our research. Our research population was determined before asking our respondents for contact information. In addition we did not select potential respondents from suggestions of other respondents. A total of 131 Haitian American were contacted for this study, with only 120 included in the sample. Complete data were obtained for 80% (96) of the youth, school administrator, parents, teachers and business men interviewed. Of the 26 youth who were not included in the study, the data is represented below.

SAMPLE REPORT

Identified Individual Population		96
<u>Individual Youth Not Interviewed</u>		26
	Deceased	2
	Unable to locate	16
	Refused	2
	Agreed to be interviewed	
	But were not	6
<u>Individual Interviewed*</u>		45
	Gross Response Rate	63%
	Net Response Rate	85%
	Refusal Rate	4%
<u>Community Leaders</u>		
	Parents	11
	Business Owners	8
	Principal	1
	Teachers	5
<u>Churches</u>		55

*Response and refusal rates based on formulas suggested by Frey (1989)

Unless there is a systematic characteristic exhibited by initiatives youths that are reluctant to be interviewed or difficult to locate, our research should not be affected by any selection bias.

Church observation: Permission was obtained from the pastor of each church for the investigator to attend church gathering to explain the goals and purpose of the study and to solicit participation.

Characteristics of the churches: the denominations of the participating churches were as follows: Pentecostal, Baptist, United Church of Christ congregation and the Nazarene congregation. For the purpose Haitian Protestant church was defined as: a church in which the majority of its members are Haitians and its leadership (i.e minister) is also Haitian, and a religious community institution that serves as an ethnic social support resource agent for Haitian families and their children. As ethnic community social support institutions, these churches were noted to lay major roles in the acculturative coping of the youth in this study. Beyond its religious function, the Haitian Protestant church was noted to be a major supportive socialization agent for Haitian American youth in this study. Social functions of the church as observed by this researcher include: emotional support (i.e, provides a source of personal comfort and consultation); reaffirmation of self- and group identity (links individuals to their past, provide group values, and a sense of belongingness; education (provides Sunday school classes that provide Bible instruction); creativity (promotes participation of young members in social activities such as drama, boy and girl scout activities, and gospel music choir); social intercourse (sponsors picnics, church dinners, sports, informal gatherings, sharing, rehearsals, and church trips for both adult and youth members).

Data Collection

The technique I used for data gathering included observation, in-depth interviews with the youth, interview with the parents, caregivers and community and four churches observances. This study used participant observation with informants in church settings, home-settings, church activities and other social gathering and fellowship activities in different environment. The observation allowed me to record some cultural values and events that the informants could not explain. For example, most of the youth informants would declare that they go to the Haitian churches to pray and to establish contact with the Supreme Power. However, a closer look at their interactions and social activities would reveal that they just seat at the church because someone forced them to do that. I witness in my observation of the four churches that the youth displays the same attitude at all of them. During the sermon, they are leaving their seats to go and hang out at the church courtyard, or they are just simply sleeping.

Scores of studies both within and outside the Haitian American churches have examined adaptation. Since the adaptation process is so complex, however more needs to be known about how the Haitian American youth are feeling so that larger-scale of leaders can more productively analyze those same variables.

We collected data gathering included observation, in-depth interviews and community interviews. In addition radio taping, participant's observation was used. This study used participant observation with informants in home settings, church activities and the hood. Structured and unstructured interviews also took place in these settings. The observation allowed me to record some cultural values and events that the informants

could not explain or did not want to discuss for many reasons such as subtlety of the issue, fear, and intimidation. In-depth interview, each individual was contacted a minimum of three times. We initiated contact with a letter explaining the nature of the study (but not in a manner to influence the way individuals would respond to interview questions), why the individual was selected for the study, and the confidential nature of the research. Included in the initial contact letter was a participation consent form required by Source of Life Doctor of Ministry Story Telling Study Committee protocols. If the initial letter did not elicit a response, we followed up with an email. Our third attempt to contact was a phone call. None of the participant was minor.

Once an individual agreed to be interviewed, we informed them an interview could take place until we received a signed copy of the consent form. None of the subjects refused to sign the consent form. Six interviews were conducted by phone, Thirty-eight, interviews were in person, and one interview was by email for the youth. The community interviews were all conducted in person. Physically we observed the four main Haitian American churches in Miami. During the observation we take notes. In each case, subjects responses were recorded by hand, the in –person were also by tape-recorded. After each interview, we made additional notes concerning interesting or relevant insights, similarities to other interviews, and identified answers needing verification from other sources.

In-depth interviews are especially appropriate given the types of questions we ask in this research. Not only are we trying to identify observable behaviors, such as proactive strategic actions on the part of initiative youths, but we also want to understand why such actions were taken. Whereas strategic actions may often be analyzed by simple counting techniques, analyzing the motives for these actions is more complex. Observing and

action does not necessarily reveal why such an action occurred. In addition we are also trying to identify non-actions, or in Doyle's famous words, the 'dog that didn't bark.' It is reasonable to assume that many of the strategic reactions by the youths include avoiding previous behaviors that led to the exodus of the church and the community. Non-actions are not as easily identified by standard quantitative methods (Evra, 1990; King, Keohane and Verba, 1994). Sometimes, the only way to assess non-actions is to interview the relevant individuals.

In-depth interviewing is also appropriate because we are trying to garner information about future strategies, not just current practices. We seek data that predicts what can we do to prevent the exodus of the Haitian American youth and how Haitian American youths will react in the future? Jesus, although His family was balanced, healthy and kind, was a problem adolescent. When children grow into adolescents, major changes occur in their minds and bodies. Families and leaders are then forced to make major transition in the way they relate to them. Organizing themselves with small children is not the same as doing so with adolescent or adult children. It is necessary to change gears, so as to pass those milestones satisfactorily. When the church leaders resist change, symptoms often arise, like a call for help to make the system more flexible and to prepare it for the new phase. Problem can arise, as I believe was the case of Jesus in his adolescent years, simply because as church leaders we do not always make those changes in a synchronized fashion. Children always almost grow rapidly than we realize and most of our Haitian leaders are not sufficiently aware of the intensity of such changes in children. Luke 2:42 tells us "And when he (Jesus) was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival." Even today the Jews still observe the Bar-Mitzva, a ritual by which children of 12 years are inducted into adult society so that they can discuss the law.

Today we know by the research of Jean Piaget that between the age of 11 and 14 a child takes a quantum leap in his or her way of thinking and cognitive development. The adolescent is now capable of formal thinking, can discuss abstract issues, can exchange ideas with confidence and ease in the world of grown-ups.

Information about proposed behavior is possible with surveys and questionnaires, in-depth interviews are better data collection processes. Using semi-structured interview question as suggested by Merton (1956-1990), in depth interviews provide flexibility to the interviewer. Unanticipated answers can be explored further. Additional questions can clarify and improve the accuracy of responses. Other questions can be added during the interview relating to events specific to an individual subject. Furthermore, we are seeking not only to identify variation in behavior but also the reasons for such variation.

Interviewing the youths responsible for the exodus is the best way to ascertain why such a decision was made.

For example in 1978 Richard Fenno published his work *Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts*. His book resulted from hundreds of in-depth-interviews with sitting members of Congress. After conducting his interviews, Fenno created a detailed typology of congressional election strategies. He came to understand why members of Congress chose to behave the way they did, and equally important, why they avoided certain behaviors. The latter point encourages the use of qualitative interview techniques to examine the decision-making strategies of the Haitian American youths.

Understanding how strategies develop over time is also important. Examining the history of the exodus of the Haitian American youth participant's experience with the process offers a perspective on how they adapt to changing circumstances. And again, interview questions can get at "why" adaptation occurred in a specific way. Simply

measuring how often Haitian American youths employ a specific strategy offers little insight into the reasons behind such a move.

In some cases, we were able to supplement the data collected during interviews. Some individuals offered us access to internal and or personal email correspondence and legal documents of their church. Other groups let us sit in on some of their internal meetings. In four cases we were given access to ongoing internal and list of churches. Access to the list of churches, allowed us additional observation showing how members of the church committee make decisions on the youth of the church and the church overall.

To ensure that the responses we received during interviews were as accurate and honest as possible, we guaranteed all respondents complete confidentiality. The confidentiality covered all interview responses, internal documents and emails, and any internal sessions we were allowed to attend. As a result, any quotes, anecdotes, or descriptions of process in this dissertation will only identify the speaker by an interview pseudonym. We also visited the four main growing Haitian churches in Dade County.

Premiere Eglise Baptiste Haitienne Emmanuel with Pastor Maxi, Wilner they have about 2500 members; *Eglise Fraternite* with Pastor Athouriste, Wismy and they got over 1700 members; *Shalom Community Church* with Pastor Floreal, Fanfan with about 1000 members; and the last not the least one was *Hosanna Worship Center (HWC)* with Bishop Saintus, Steve who had over 3000 members and has been reduced to less than 200 members during the year 2004. Bishop Saintus was the youngest pastor in our community, he was about 25 years old and his church is the youngest one, five years old. I will talk more about this specific church further.

During our interview, It is important to remember that semi-structured interviews do not ask the same questions of every subject. In many cases, we ended up asking unplanned questions. In other instances, having received certain answers, we elected to skip planned questions. In addition, each participant was asked specific questions about the unique aspects of their experiences with the Haitian churches.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

“Historical-explanatory” research “uses academically recognized theory to explain the causes, pattern or consequences of historical cases. Such work often provides a good deal of description but focuses on explaining what is described” (Evera 1996, p.57). Many of these theses are “reliant on common sense deduction (p.58). We rely heavily upon common sense deduction to examine the hundreds of pages of interview text. We look for patterns of responses that suggest or identify common strategies to avoid invalidation, evolution of behaviors over time, and consistent mistakes made by the leaders that led to the exodus of the Haitian American youths.

Since the purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings (Patton, 1990) data collection was followed by analysis and interpretation. Patton (1990) cautions that description must be carefully separated from interpretation when analyzing data:

It is tempting to rush into the creative work of interpreting the data before doing the detailed, hard work of putting together coherent answers to major descriptive questions. But description comes first.⁹²

⁹² Patton, 1990 p.375

Data analysis involves organizing what has already been seen, heard and read so that a researcher can make sense out of all the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Therefore, patterns in the data which emerged from stories and life experiences of the Haitian American adolescents were coded and categorized according to underlying themes so that others reading the results could understand and draw their own conclusions (Patton 1990). The purpose of reflection or analysis is to grasp the experiential structures that make up experiences (Van Manen, 1990). The process of data collection and that of data analysis facilitates comprehension. Coding as a central process helped in sorting the data and uncovering underlying meaning in the text. To gain understanding thematic analysis of the transcript was conducted on each participants' interview record. Major themes within the paragraphs were noted by writing the categories in the margins. Upon completion of this process, each labeled paragraph was cut, grouped and pasted by themes on a new page. During the process I looked for and noted signs that were indicative of implied meanings. Five variables were picked in the life story experiences of Haitian American youths in the Haitian churches throughout the Diaspora, and the other participants.

LIMITATIONS

Like all research designs, a variety of limitations apply to this research. First, the serious time and financial resources necessary to conduct in-depth interviews naturally limits the sample population to a relatively small number. It would have been ideal if I could have interviewed all the Haitian American youth who exit the Haitian churches and their associates, who participated in both successful and unsuccessful in the Haitian churches. However, it would have been impractical and too costly.

Second individuals who participate in the initiative process are Haitian American youths who exit and those who also remain in the Haitian congregations. This may result in some respondent error in the form of misleading answers. We tried to allow for this by promising confidentiality. Eleanor Singer (1993) suggests that confidentiality will increase the accuracy of answers but may not be enough to ensure a subject's complete honesty. In most cases we sought to gather additional data from ancillary sources such as journal, observation and informal interviews with lower level participants, to place the interview subjects' responses in perspective.

And finally like all types of research, there is the possibility of interviewer and/or respondent error (Groves, 1989). As the data recorder, we may have failed to ask the best questions, interpreted answers incorrectly or inadvertently biased the respondents' answers. Nonetheless, the findings can be generalized to the larger population of the youths. Geography did not appear to have any effect upon respondents' answers. And despite the tendency of interview subjects to overestimate their role as a power broker, overlook issues they would rather not reveal, and to pontificate.

EXISTENTIAL INVESTIGATION

The phenomenon presented in creative literature, art, poetry, photography, and movies was pursued in order to generate data about the meaning of the experience of being a Haitian adolescent living in another culture. This particular approach for this investigation gave greater insight to the meaning of the everyday experience of Haitian adolescents living in Florida.

Images of adolescence were discovered in English literature. The main theme addressed in the selected literature is that adolescence is a time of turbulence, excess, and passion. This is congruence with the modern day view of adolescence as a time of "storm

and stress.” This notion of storm and stress has its root in antiquity, but it was formalized by Hall in 1904 in his description of adolescence as a period of “*sturm und drang*” (Coleman 1978). However, prior to the twentieth century, children were thought to be the parents’ personal property. Children were controlled through stern discipline and spiritualism. Throughout the twentieth century, there have been numerous stereotypes and modern day image of young people held by adults. The theme of each decade is reflective of societal issues and trends in the U.S. (Violato & Wiley, 1990)

- The 1920s reflects the country’s tremendous expansion with prosperity and parties; teens were viewed as fun loving, carefree, and self-indulgent;
- The 1930s were considered the bleak “dirty thirties”, young people were viewed as socially conscious. World War II threw teens into the war effort;
- The 1940s Post World War II teens were considered to be serious, committed, patriotic and heroic;
- The 1950s depicted youths as rebellious without reason, emotionally turbulent, and likely to strike out at any moment without reason;
- The 1960s youths were thought to be engaged in a struggle against the “establishment” (the adult world) as a force of evil. *The Publishing of The Vanishing Adolescent by Friedenderg (1959)* and *The Making of a Counterculture* by Roszak (1969) along with the media helped to portray the image of teens as visionaries distinguished by a purity of moral vision (Adelson, 1964);
- The 1970s was considered to be the “Me Generation”; teens were thought to endorse and exploit the establishment;
- In the 1980s teens were seen as troubled by the possibility of nuclear war, world famine, and the break-up family;
- The 1990s is referred to as the “impulse Culture”; teens are often described as angry and lacking support systems.

Generally, theories about the human nature and human development are embedded in the broader sociocultural milieu in which they are conceived and thrive. Descriptions of youth have varied over time and thus perceptions of adolescent development are influenced by economic and political ideologies (Broughton, 1983, Ewen, 1977). During periods of economic depression, the themes that characterized

adolescence are immaturity and emotional instability, and during more prosperous times youths have been depicted as mature, stable individuals (Enright et al., 1987).

In addition to the modern day depiction of adolescents, the researcher found many wonderful creative works in English literature that include description of adolescents. This helped to establish the phenomenon of the meaning of being a Haitian American adolescent dealing with the Haitian churches as a legitimate topic of inquiry. Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), in his “prologue to Canterbury Tales,” characterized youth in the persona of the squire Chaucer depicted the squire in at least three dimensions: first, the adolescent as described is frivolous and devoted to love and silly pleasures, the second dimension attributed to the squire is that he possesses lust and turbulent sensuality; and finally the third stereotype he attributes to the squire is his adventurousness and activity (Violato & Wiley 1990).

William Shakespeare’s (1564-1616) depiction of youth has great similarities with Chaucer. Shakespeare saw youth as being in transition between childhood and adulthood and as characterized by excess, passion, and sensuality. This is reflected in many of his plays. For example in “Henry IV, Part I” King Henry reprimands his son and chastises him for his irresponsible behavior. In the following passage, the prince tells his father that he is going through the stages of adolescence from which he is confident he can eventually cleanse himself.

**My self of many I am charg’d withal;
Yet such extenuation let me beg. . .
I may for some things true, wherein my youth
Hath faulty wand’reed and irregular. . .
(Act 3, sc 2, ii 21-27)**

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's view of adolescence is seen in the actions of young people in the play. Adolescents engage in irresponsible sword play which leads to the unexpected and tragic deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt at the hands of the impassioned Tybalt and Romeo (Violatto & Wiley, 1990). This impulsive behavior is also seen in the relationship between Romeo and Juliet. They fall in love and in one night become engaged and vow their eternal love. In another scene, this haste and hot-blooded behavior is repeated when Romeo, believing that Juliet is dead kills himself. When Juliet awakens and finds Romeo dead, she too kills herself without any hesitation. Shakespeare depicted youth as irresponsible, impulsive, and hot headed. These qualities frequently lead to disaster and self-destructive behavior.

John Milton (1608-1674) was a Puritan. He saw adolescence as a time of joy. This is reflected in his poem "L'Allegro" where he utilizes the symbols of youth to describe the carefree, pleasure-seeking man. The young man disdains insightful contemplation and prefers the pleasures of daydreaming (Baker, 1975).

Matthew Prior (1664-1721) viewed adolescence as a stage where pleasure, passion, and love were of prime concern. This is alluded to in Prior's Poem "Ode"

**White blooming Youth, and Gay Delight
Sit on thy rosey cheeks confest,
Thou hast my Dear, undoubted Right
To triumph o'er the destin'd breast,
My reason bends to what thy Eyes ordain;
For I was born to Love, and thou to Reign.
(Noyes, 1956, p. 223**

It is clear that there is little variance in the perceptions and depictions of youth over the generations these various authors depicted adolescence as a stage of development in which sensuality, excess and turbulence prevail in one form or another. These descriptions of adolescent images are seen from the parents, adults, and Christian leader's

lens. Haitian American adolescents themselves have a lot of questions about the changes they are going through.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

. . . and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the word of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

—Martin Luther King Jr.⁹³

This phase of the process has been ongoing throughout the investigation. Through the art of church story model, the essence of the phenomenon was captured. This process provided the researcher with a linguistic understanding of the meaning of the Haitian American adolescent's experience of being in the Haitian churches in the Diaspora, Merleau-Ponty stated that: "The operative language of literature, poetry, of conversation and of philosophy, which possesses meaning less than it is possessed by it; does not speak of it, or speaks according to it, or lets it speak and be spoken within us, breaks through our present. This language is open upon the things, called forth by voices of silence and continues an effort of articulation."⁹⁴

Using adolescents' voices and stories, the phenomenon of creative examination was used to manifest from the depth of silence an understanding of the meaning of the Haitian American adolescent's experience in the "Diaspora." The church story model clearly shows leaders its potential for providing direction, experiences and resources that meet the current challenge of the exodus of Haitian American youths in the Diaspora.

⁹³ Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday Commission.

⁹⁴ Merleau-Ponty, iii.

Fundamentally, this is the process for learning the stories of the Haitian American youths in the Haitian churches. This chapter will explain in detail that process' key component: the interview. Given that the author has the most to gain from the interviews, I make every effort to be the most excellent and industrious interviewer in the community, individually interviewing as many youths as possible and encouraging and training others to do likewise. But let me get to the point.

. . . I'm too alone to be proud
 You don't know how it feels to be me
 So let's get to the point. . .
 Let's head on down the road
 There's somewhere I got to go
 No, you don't know how it feels to be me⁹⁵

"You don't know how it feels to be me." This is the universal cry of all of the Haitian adolescents from the Haitian churches. For both leaders and adolescents, the teenage years are characterized by confusion and conflict in the Haitian churches. "You don't understand" might be the most often experienced accusation. Not understanding some "thing" is what stirs the phenomenological curiosity in me. Not being able to understand my teenager stirs the leader in me. As a therapist, not being able to understand Haitian adolescents living in a different culture stirs the Haitian researcher in me.

This study stirs deeply within me. The passion to understand Haitian adolescents' experience, the meaning of their experience, their perception of reality, and their ontology

⁹⁵ Tom Petty, *You Don't Know How It Feels* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1994).

or the way of “being” that makes sense to them propels me to want to understand how it feels to “be them.”

For my youth in-depth interviews, I once again worked with Haitian American adolescents. As described in my previous chapter, this research is composed of forty-five adolescents, thirty-five of whom are Haitian American and ten who are Haitian Haitian. Also, I interviewed one of the better-spoken and advanced musicians in the Haitian community.

While at first I was a bit unsure of what to expect from the interview process, my confidence was strengthened after reading Dr. Thomas E. Boomershine’s explanation of story telling that “interviewing allows insight into reading interests and attitudes, self perceptions, and understanding the language process.”⁹⁶ I was excited to begin the interviews and learn as much as possible. In reviewing objectives, I went into the interview with numerous hopes for positive outcomes from this experience.

I began the interview by explaining to the youth that I would be asking them questions about their experiences in the Haitian churches that would help me learn about their stories and views, which would help me become a better leader. My interviewees were very excited to help and answered all of my questions with great thought and enthusiasm. Most of them were wonderful interview candidate and their thoughts and responses helped me learn much about the Haitian churches, their development and concepts and how interviewing can assist in assessing the Haitian churches.

To begin, I asked them for their name and the church that they were attending. Questions such as these give interviewers insight into interests and attitudes as described

⁹⁶ Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 86.

by Vacca,⁹⁷ as well as more specifically the motivation and background of the candidate. In response to this first question, most of them were extremely happy to tell their name and describe the church that they were attending. From their response, one could clearly gather that the candidates were Haitians with a positive attitude toward remaining in the Haitian churches.

The next two questions I asked directly related to internal oppression and personal experiences in the Haitian churches. What motivates the adolescents to leave or exit the Haitian churches? We found five variables: Bicultural, Centrality, Culture Clash/Culture Shock, and Internal Oppression and Voicelessness. (See Tables next on the following two pages.)

The data collected from the Haitian American adolescents is in agreement with the data collected from the parent/caregivers and teachers/school administrators and businessmen in the community. In the Haitian community, most parents or caregivers believe that their children are exiting the Haitian community because of: Bicultural, Centrality, Culture Clash/Culture Shock, and Internal Oppression. The tables present information about the participants in the study, the question or questions addressed and the key findings to show the rates or percentages of participants that believe or support the findings.

⁹⁷ Vacca et al. 2003

Table 2. Variables recorded from our Participants.

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
<i>Parents, Caregivers, Adults of Haitian background,</i>	<p><i>1. Why do you think the Haitian American youth are exiting our Haitian churches?</i></p> <p><i>2. Do you think youth of Haitian background understands everything in Creole at the Haitian churches</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Language barrier</i> • <i>Culture shock</i> • <i>Internal oppression /Dictatorship</i> • <i>In between visitation of the American churches</i> • <i>Church government/ administration</i> • <i>Lack of love, understanding and charity</i> • <i>Selfishness/reluctant</i> • <i>No they don't.</i> • <i>Pastors speak French-Creole.</i> • <i>Yes they have great difficulties to understand everything in Creole at home it is worst in church.</i> • <i>Majority of the youth has problems to understand.</i>
<p><i>98% believe that the children exit the community because of those variables. 2% believe because they are reluctant or they are just selfish.</i></p> <p><i>99% believe the children don't understand Creole Services at a full extent. Even in a small sample of subjects. The majority of informants in the survey have a very high estimation. Only 1% believe some may have problems. But in general these children don't understand.</i></p>		

Table 3 Key Findings of Haitian American Adolescents.

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
<i>Haitian American Adolescents Male / Female</i>	<i>1. Why do you exit the Haitian churches?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We don't understand everything in Creole</i> • <i>They refuse to have services in both languages.</i> • <i>They look at us as little children. They don't give us a chance to grow</i> • <i>Only the pastor's kids have priority in the church.</i> • <i>Too much manipulation and you can't talk</i> • <i>After visiting the American church I rather be with them.</i> • <i>Dress code is suit on men or women</i> • <i>Too much French/Creole</i> • <i>Tired of being oppressed</i> • <i>I want to be free</i>
	<i>2. As Haitian American do you understands everything in Creole at the Haitian churches</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No we don't, pastors are too sophisticated with their French/Creole</i> • <i>Majority of the service we sleep, because we don't understand.</i> • <i>We only like the beat of the music but we don't understand all the words</i>
<i>100% of the Haitian American youth agrees that they don't understand everything in Creole. They also agree that the variables identified are their main causes for exiting the Haitian churches.</i>		

Table 4 Variables recorded from our Principal, Teachers, Businessmen

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
<i>Principals, Teachers, Businessmen,</i>	<p><i>1. Why do you think the Haitian American youth are exiting our Haitian churches?</i></p> <p><i>2. Do you think youth of Haitian background understands everything in Creole at the Haitian churches</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Language barrier</i> • <i>Culture shock</i> • <i>Internal oppression /Dictatorship</i> • <i>In between visitation of the American churches</i> • <i>Church government/ administration</i> • <i>Lack of love, understanding and charity</i> • <i>Selfishness/reluctant</i> • <i>No they don't.</i> • <i>Pastors speak French-Creole.</i> • <i>Yes they have great difficulties to understand everything in Creole at home it is worst in church.</i> • <i>Majority of the youth has problems to understand.</i>
<p><i>98% believe that the children exit the community because of those variables. 2% believe because they are reluctant or they are just selfish.</i></p> <p><i>99% believe the children don't understand Creole Services at a full extent. Even in a small sample of subjects. The majority of informants in the survey have a very high estimation. Only 1% believe some may have problems. But in general these children don't understand.</i></p>		

Table 5 Variables recorded from our Observation of the four main Haitian Churches

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
<i>Observation</i>	<p><i>1. Why do you think the Haitian American youth are exiting our Haitian churches?</i></p> <p><i>2. Do you think youth of Haitian background understands everything in Creole at the Haitian churches</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Language barrier</i> • <i>Culture shock</i> • <i>Internal oppression /Dictatorship</i> • <i>In between visitation of the American churches</i> • <i>Church government/ administration</i> • <i>Lack of love, understanding and charity</i> • <i>Selfishness/reluctant</i> • <i>No they don't.</i> • <i>Pastors speak French-Creole.</i> • <i>Yes they have great difficulties to understand everything in Creole at home it is worst in church.</i> • <i>Majority of the youth has problems to understand.</i>
<p><i>98% believe that the children exit the community because of those variables. 2% believe because they are reluctant or they are just selfish.</i></p> <p><i>99% believe the children don't understand Creole Services at a full extent. Even in a small sample of subjects. The majority of informants in the survey have a very high estimation. Only 1% believe some may have problems. But in general these children don't understand.</i></p>		

As we said in the previous chapter, during the process we looked for and noted signs that were indicative of implied meanings. Five variables were picked in the life story experiences of Haitian American youths in the Haitian churches throughout the Diaspora, and the other participants: the dependent and independent variables picked in this study are:

(1) **Bicultural:** defined as the degree to which a participant interacted with both the Haitian culture and with the American culture in terms of language use, cultural activities and ethnic interaction.

Competence in the churches has become a priority. The pastor, the youth leaders, the deacon, the ministers must be bilingual. They need to be better equipped in order to help acculturating individuals cope adaptively with language barrier than a Sunday service that neglects the bicultural youth.

A- Haitian American Youth

Jacob a 19-year-old undergraduate student during our interview said: “One the major problem that we as young adolescent are encountered in our churches is the language barrier.” An adoption of bicultural acculturation orientation needs to apply.

Joshua, a 25-year-old medical student stated:

Bicultural ethnic identity among the Haitian adolescents is considered to be the key for their exodus at the community. They don’t understand the French Creole that our leaders are speaking to them at the social places. I remembered I was in church with my parents. I always had to bother them every minute by asking, “what did the pastor say?” He was using some weird French words while he was speaking Creole and I barely understood him. We were about 65% young adolescents in my church. When we reached the age of 17, about 70% of us left and go to an English speaking church. I doubt if there are any more of us in that church. Their Sunday school class was in Creole, even the verse to learn . . . I mean we were just in distress at this class. In other words, we never learned anything due to the language barrier.

Linda and Brenda 19 years old twin sisters stated: “We got much more help from the American churches. They communicate with us in English. We have been in the

Haitian churches all of our lives, we could not understand any verses that our pastors were saying in the pulpit. By the way he mostly spoke French not even Creole so we could of at least understood a little bit. I believe that my place is not their church, if I really want to know the Word of God. They have no pity for us, they expect us to get everything and anything that they are saying. No-o-o! I rather be out instead of wasting my time with them and in their church.

Naphtalie, my daughter, was very upset with me when she asked me: Where will we go to church this Sunday? I answered her in the Haitian churches . . ., No way, Mom, I don't understand your people! Please let me attend the American services. Your people are just funny, they only teach us in French not even Creole, sometimes I just laugh, I don't get anything. Can you believe my Sunday school teacher is asking me to study the verses in French? They must have been crazy! They refused to know and understand that we do speak Creole but a little, we can't even understand everything in Creole and now she is so exaggerated by asking me, Naphtalie, to study the verse in French. Please tell your pastor to speak English.

B- Principals, Teachers, Businessmen

Mr. Librun, a high school teacher said during his interview:

The Haitian American youth possesses several of the characteristics that are attributes to an "at risk" population. The primary obstacle these children face is the lack of English proficiency. Language is a problem for several reasons. School and church systems tend to place Haitian children into French language services. French is the official language of Haiti. In reality, Haitian children speak Haitian Creole that, until recently, was a spoken language without a written orthography. In addition, most Haitian children entered in school with very little formal education. At best, the level of formal education in Haiti has been no higher than 7th grade; therefore, students enter high school with many skills deficiencies in the basic areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. To further complicate their transition from Haiti to the Dade County School, the school system had very few teachers who were fluent in Haitian Creole,

thus creating an environment in which students could easily be disenfranchised. Dade County at a certain time had considerable difficulty finding teachers who were fluent in Haitian Creole, but when the School district actively recruited Haitian Creole speaking teachers and staff, communication within the classroom improved considerably. Now does the church do the same thing? I doubt it, because we are having a massive exodus of our Haitian children today in the community.

Arrival in the school, in most cases, has been traumatic for Haitian students. Most of these students live in a single-parent domicile usually with their father while their mother remains in Haiti. While this is not usually an “at-risk” factor, it does have a negative effect on many students. Although the children are cared for, there is a lack of the tenderness usually provided by a mother. In some cases, there is a “stepmother” present creating an atmosphere of tension and resentment. Typically, the stepmother views the children as an added burden and most of the time they are voiceless.

James, the Principal, said:

There is no way you can teach those children in Creole, especially since you know that Haitian leaders don’t speak a true Creole. They speak a French Creole. The leaders of the community need to be bilingual so they can reach the children. It is evident that they are not staying in our community due to the language barrier. What makes it worse, some Haitian parents who do not even speak English properly bring those children in the school system with them to translate for them, and you see the children translating for them in a broken Creole that is not understandable.

Jacquelin, a psychologist in the Haitian community said:

I was born and raised in Haiti. After my high school years, I came to the United States. Theoretically, you will see the Haitian American adolescent very resilient to adapt in the churches. First, they have a language barrier—our pastors do not speak proper Creole, they speak a French Creole which makes the first-born Haitian American adolescents very stressed. They consider themselves out of the services because they don’t understand anything in the services. Those children are bicultural. In order for them to be successful in the church sphere of adjustment among the Haitian Haitian, there is a correlation relationship that needs to take place in the services. Otherwise they will exit the community. They don’t have their space in our churches. They are potentially faced with

negative social identity which can further complicate their social and emotional adjustment to the Haitian environment

C- Parents/Caregivers, Adult of Haitian Background

Ms Jackie, ce mwen ki fè toute six pitites mwen aller nan l'Eglise American. Yo pa krompran' anyin nan l'Eglise pas nou yo. Pasté yo chita pallé Creole Franciser. Mwen min'm tou mwen pa kompran'n toute bagay. Epitou yo pa respecté ti moun yo, min yo pran lajan yo. Ti moun yo pas ka bay yon opinion, sa sa yé la dictature fini, depi Jean Claude Duvalier allé !

Ms Jackie, It is me who asked my six children to leave the Haitian Churches and attend an American church. They don't understand anything in the services. The leaders keep speaking a French/Creole. Even me as an adult does not understand everything because I don't speak French. Also they don't respect the children, but they like their money. In the church the youth can't give their opinion, they always stay silent. What is that, we are no longer in slavery, Since Jean Claude Duvalier left dictatorship is over. }

One informant stated :

Ils pensent que c'est la langue de l'esclavage, il n'y a pas de culture.

(They think Haitian Creole is the language of slavery, with no culture.)

Joyce 33-year-old youth leader said, "There is significant interaction effect between acculturation and generational status. It is factual that our young people speak English more than Creole. Don't get me wrong, we do speak Creole. Nevertheless, we don't understand everything in Creole. Again our leaders are very insensitive. They expect us to understand everything while they don't really speak a good Creole. They speak a French Creole. Most of us have never been to school in Haiti."

(2) Centrality: Relative position in a network of relations, indexed variously by closeness to others, betweenness with respect to others, number of contacts with others, in between experience of churches.

A- Haitian American Youth

Dafenie a 23-year-old nurse stated during her interview:

Jacotte, don't expect it to be easy or run smoothly in the Haitian churches. It will take some specific choices on the leaders' part to be obedient to Jesus. It may take some training to shake off old habits of the leaders and be free to let him build his community around you, but it is all worth it. I know it bothers some young people like me, that we leave our Haitian churches and attend services at the other American churches.

Nevertheless, I can tell you absolutely that my worst days outside the Haitian churches are still better than my best days inside them. To me the difference is like listening to someone talk about golf or actually taking a set of clubs out to a course and playing golf. Being out of the Haitian church is like that. In our day, we don't need more talk about the church, but people who are simply ready to live in its reality.

D- Principals, Teachers, Businessmen

During our interview with Sandra, a lawyer, she stated: "Some preaching in the American churches recalled history and slavery; they addressed cultural survival and religious belief in African ancestors and syncretism. Most of the messages preached carry specific messages adapted to the needs of members." In most of the American churches, messages addressed social issues in regard to the needs of their congregation. Yet they were reached by different people. The American church is home. Not like the Haitian

church, when you are in a Haitian church as an adolescent the leaders want to intimidate you, they feel threatened. In the American church, children learn about their cultural values and learn to appreciate their culture in the church setting. In the Haitian churches, it's all about Satan, Sin and heaven. No social issues are addressed.

Ms Carole, a 30-year-old Haitian American who owned her own firm, said during an interview that: "in behavior there is disrespect for others and their property. The disrespect was shown to the Haitian adolescents with regard to their language, their dress, their subculture, their dating customs and their behavior in general." Most of the Haitian churches are corrupt in their setting, structure, church government and their organization. In most of them, the pastor and his wife are the key leaders. This is completely wrong. When we attend the American church its different. Their services are short. They have an administration. The secretary is not their family member but a member of the church. They have an administrator and there are different ministries within the church that are led by people who have a call and who are also capable of doing. They are not intimidated by professionals. They need you. In the Haitian churches members, lay leaders, pastors and youths are all frustrated.

Thompson, a middle school Math teacher, stated: As a professional who was raised in the Haitian churches and left them due to their inability to feed me properly and to the treatment that the Haitian American youth received. Right now, I don't anticipate finding one perfect Haitian church on this side of eternity. Jacotte, don't get me wrong. Perfection is not my goal, but finding leaders with God's priorities. It's one thing for people to struggle toward an ideal they share together. It's another to realize that our ideals have little in common.

I make no secret of the fact that I am deeply troubled by most of the Haitian leaders in the Diaspora. First of all, most of them are illiterate. They are always insecure. They have no connection with the youth. They spend more energy conforming behavior to what their institution needs rather than helping the youth be transformed at the foot of the cross. In the American church, youth ministry is the central focus of the church. The youth have a voice. They are in their budget. There are different programs for them. I'm tired of trying to fellowship with people who only view church as a two-hour a week dumping ground for guilt while they live the rest of the week with the same priorities as the world. I'm tired of those who depend on their own works of righteousness but who have no compassion for the youth. I'm tired of insecure people using the Body of Christ as an extension of their own ego and manipulating it to satisfy their own needs. I'm tired of sermons more filled with the bondage of religion than the freedom of God's love and where relationships take a back seat to the demands of an efficient institution. Jacotte, that is exactly what the Haitian churches are, and guess what? I am out!

E- Parents/Caregivers, Adult of Haitian Background

Ricardo a 23-year-old male graduated from Trinity University in Biblical studies. During our interview he stated:

I do appreciate your concern for the Zoe's in the community and your willingness to raise issues that have caused you concern. I know the way I am about to relate to the church is a bit unconventional and you may even call it dangerous. Believe me, I understand that concern because I used to think that way myself and even taught others to as well.

If you are happy with the status quo of organized Haitian American churches in Miami, you may not like what you are about to hear from me today as a young ZOE. My purpose is not to convince you to see these incredible church leaders the same way I do, but to answer your questions as openly and honestly as I can. Even if we don't end up agreeing, hopefully you will understand that our differences need not estrange us as members of Christ's body. I have never liked this question, even when I was able to answer it with a specific organization. I know what church means culturally, but it is based on a false premise with most of the Haitian leaders in our community.

Haitian churches are the worst place our young people can be as far as the Haitian leaders. The types of treatment that we received from our own blood leaders give us a false sense of security and eternity. In contrary, when we attend an American service, we praise, we worship, we learn and specifically we feel at home. Our inputs are important; people listen to us individually. It is incredibly painful to see our young adolescents without any respect in the Haitian churches, while in the American church, the leaders are well equipped and they don't feel threatened by those of us who have a career. They don't shut us up. Socially, they are up to date. They have a special corner for the youth and it is not about only their biological children.

You know, Jacotte, I can go on and on . . . I would rather stay where I am. I find a quality of relationship, respect, understanding, and teaching. And the American church is not a one-man show; they are organized.

(3) Culture Clash, Culture Shock: define as: A clash between two different cultures.

A- Haitian American Youth

On November 23, 2004, Jeanine, a 20-year-old Haitian American young lady was interviewed at Bethesda church where she insisted that the problem our Haitian children are going through is that “the church refused to understand that they cannot impose their views and customs upon us anymore. We are in a liberal society, especially America.”

On November 27 at the corner of 54th street where the ZOE’S hangout, I interviewed a group of them after I introduced myself and, of course, most of them know me. They were about 10 young men and women hanging out together, smoking marijuana. They have gold teeth, baggy pants, and a big loud radio. Two of them were just released from jail; two of them were dread men. When I walked up to them, they said: “Minister Jay, please don’t invite us to none of your church. You know we are unacceptable. You know your people are too demanding, holy, and fresh. We rather go to an American church where they will not look at us outside. We prefer the American culture.”

F- Principals, Teachers, Businessmen

Cecile has owned her daycare in Little Haiti for the past 35 years. She knows most of the ZOE’s. This her statement:

Since usually both Haitian American parents work, daycare must be provided for their children. These children are usually cared for by other Haitian women who live nearby. Haitian mothers prefer this arrangement because they believe that community child-care facilities have inflexible hours, do not offer personalized care, and are too expensive. Although Haitian parents are usually extremely loving and affectionate with

their children, they are also very strict and authoritarian. Childrearing may be shared by siblings as well as parents. Children are taught to show unquestioned obedience to their elders. Children do not usually ask their parents questions about intimate subjects such as sex because this would be disrespectful. Some parents tend to employ physical punishment, the same disciplinary method used by their parents in Haiti. Haitian American parents generally do not like professional counseling or assignment to parenting groups. They feel that other individuals from diverse cultural groups view children's behavior from a different perspective. One way of dealing with a child whom parents feel they cannot control is to send the child to Haiti to live with kin.

Some Haitian American children face adaptation difficulties in the United States because they are torn between two cultures. Their peers encourage them to become Americanized, while their families try to maintain Haitian cultural traditions. Generally, these children elect to speak English even at home, while their parents continue to speak Creole or French. Most American-born children have become socialized to mainstream American culture and, unlike their parents, have little interest in returning to Haiti. Some adult Haitian American children who are successfully employed show little enthusiasm for contributing money to fulfill their parents' economic obligations in Haiti to bring kin and friends to America. This practice sometimes causes intergenerational conflicts. Even in their religious beliefs this problem occurred.

Roland a retired high school teacher in Miami stated: "The movie *My Family* is an important portrayal of immigrants struggles. It is the story of a Mexican-American family. It captures the adolescents and the family struggles, as well as the crippling isolation experienced by those from a different culture. The movie starts by showing the struggles

to enter the U.S. with the year-long walk by the father to reach California. The film shows the mother's determination and strength to return to California and her family after she is deported."

The determination depicted in this movie is the same determination that drives many Haitians of Haiti in search of a better life. Haitians take the high seas in very unsafe boats, thus earning the label "boat people." Once in U.S., Haitians are generally confused and frustrated. They are often unable to provide effective parenting, academic guidance, and financial and emotional support. Although they attempt to assimilate into the majority quickly, Haitian refugees are no longer a Haitian population and they are not yet American. They may be considered a transitional population. The situation can be very confusing for a Haitian adult and much more so for an adolescent. Not only are they experiencing the turmoil of normal adolescent development, they also struggle with the labels ascribed to their cultural group.

Many Haitians, especially adolescents, often reject their background and associate with the disaffected in their inner city, rejecting the immigrant values of their parents and concealing their being. In the film *My Family*, these behaviors are vividly portrayed by the character "Chucho." He is a teenager, a first generation Mexican-American, who openly shows his rejection of his parents' ways. He joins a gang, sells marijuana, and is in constant conflict with the law. During a confrontation with his parents, he explodes in rage and anger telling his father he has no respect for these immigrant values of hard work and being law-abiding citizens. What counts in the U.S. is the "dollar," and he shows a pack of money to his dad. He screams out that he hates what they stand for, but most of all he says, "I don't want to be like you."

Being Haitian is perceived as a burden for Haitian adolescents. They are not proud of their heritage and lack knowledge of the richness of their history. Like “Chucho,” they try hard to be different and show their rejection of their parents’ way of being. This is characteristic of the teenage years; however, the adolescent who is from a different culture seems to be in the position of rejecting a fundamental component of being—culture—as well as engaging in the normal rebellion against parental control.

“Each one of us experiences, remembers, react, interacts, feels and thinks always through our own personality.”

On November 14 2004, during our interview with Mr. James, the Principal of Bethsaida Seventh Day Adventist School, he stated “Our young Haitian American youth are dealing with a culture clash.” The leaders of the community and the church need to know and accept that they have to have new avenues and they need to change their views and their customs, otherwise in the next five to ten years, we will not have many of the Haitian youth in our community.

Mr. Frontil, a business man well known in the Haitian community, stated during our interview with him on October 14 2004: “the way our Haitian churches are set up, kids are not allowed to express or to think for themselves.” What we need to be aware of is unique, i.e. we have a culture problem. While we were interviewing him at his business, we noticed a young lady who got into trouble with her mother due to her clothes. She did not send the child to school with the clothes she was wearing. The child was just getting ready to call the police on her mother.

G- Parents/Caregivers, Adult of Haitian Background

(4) Voiceless: defined as being completely silent in the church. They are social economic issues within our society, whereby the church should intervene. Jesus dealt with the social issues that were in His environment. For a long time now Haitian people have been plague with the Immigration problem in America. Surely enough the churches were silent in counteracting the Immigration problem. Furthermore the Haitian community have long dealt with economic issues because we are economically neglected. Due to the faith based initiative that President Bush created, all the Haitian pastors had to were to create an organization that could of have the funds source in the Haitian community but again we were silent.

Martin Luther King says: "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."⁹⁸

A- Haitian American Youth

Diana, an 18-year-old Zoe child during the interview stated: "The Haitian pastors suffered much heartache as they saw the barriers of autonomy broken down. As a young Haitian adolescent, I'd rather continue separation from the Haitian churches because it became the voice of the young people and pastor from denominational ties. Don't forget, young people rejoice in the free air of independence and we like to give our opinion. We are human beings. Slavery is over."

Sara, a 19-year-old college student said:

"Breaking the Silence" in the Haitian churches will encourage dialogue around often difficult and uncomfortable topics. There is a longtime barrier to unity in our Haitian

churches with our pastors and our lay leaders. The time has come for the youth, instead of exiting the Haitian churches, to stay and challenge the oppressive politics in practice. We are sick and tired of being oppressed by our leaders; we are sick and tired of being unused in our church; Every time we go, if you notice it Ms Jackie, only the pastor's children are doing anything as far as youth ministry. I mean, are there any other young people in the church? There is some sort of racism and destructive forces in our midst. It is very sad. We are losing the best in our community. Look at New Birth, a black American church, most of their youth are Haitian American, the keyboardist is an Haitian woman, the leader of their praise and worship team is an Haitian American, they were all born and raised in the Haitian churches. What is going on?

Natacha, a 26-year-old graduate from nursing school, said:

Our churches need to have better structure, better strategy, and vision for their youth. There is no way I am going to bring them a dime, unless I see a change in them. I struggled before I became a nurse. My parents were leaders of the church, once they died, they completely forgot about us. I had to work full time to take care of my younger siblings and myself while I went to school. My parents gave all their energy in the Haitian churches. The same way, different institutions think about retirement. Church needs to do that. What makes me so upset is the fact that they offer you nothing. Not even an English service. Most of the pastors refused to work. They led the church with their wives and the wives do not work also. They hardly read. I am not stupid. I worked hard to become who I am today; I refused to make them rich. Why do the American pastors work? They go to school; most of them at least have a Bachelor in theology. Our Haitian pastors, all they

⁹⁸ Delivered 4 April 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in New York City.

talk is money. They don't have a board in their church. Youth can't talk or give them any ideas. When you look at the church, we are fifty percent of it. We are the ones who play the music, do the ushering, and yet, we can't talk. We are not in the Duvalier's regime any more. I can't talk. I am out.

H- Principals, Teachers, Businessmen

Mr. James the Principal stated:

The Holy Spirit provided the cohesive for the early churches. Yet God designed to use one man—Paul—as the cohesion in fellowship and position. His testimony of involvement (II Corinthians 11:16-33) included the phrase of responsibility, “. . . the care of all the churches . . .” (II Corinthians 11:28). This was a daily concern of the man of God. Can that concern be transferred to others? Only those related are usually concerned . . . When churches unite for mutual purposes and fellowship, they are bound together in brotherly love and concern. We have seen such fellowships destroyed in the striving for power and position. The pastors of the Haitian churches are fully aware of these potential problems. Yet, there is a need for this kind of fellowship with the youth. Don't forget, I grew up in the Haitian churches.

Jean, a well-known tailor in the community, during his interview at his shop said:

“Most Haitian churches have been stigmatized as old-fashioned, outdated and behind the times when discussing, teaching, or preaching to the youth.” Even in the homes, parents still don't want the adolescents to be dependent or to talk freely to them. "Breaking the Silence" challenges the Church to move from a state of denial to a standard of healthy, inclusive faith-based dialogue.

In 2 Kings 7:9 four men said, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves . . . " There is the sin of silence and now it is being

broken. Church leaders should not fear the open and honest ideas of the youth. God created humankind with reason and the privilege of choice as established in the first book of Genesis.

"Breaking the Silence" in their midst recognizes that the Haitian youth is an extensive and influential force in the lives of the church. Quite often, the only time the leader responds to the youth is when judging and or condemning individuals. "Breaking the Silence" will encourage critical thinking and reflection by adults about how to meet youth where they are in their journey of "choice" regarding their community.

Lenia, a 35-year-old high school teacher stated:

Church is called to be a sign and instrument of the communion and justice that God intends for all people. This is not what we see in the Haitian community. There is an irrefutable link between the churches' leaders' search for unity in faith and youth ministry and the struggle to overcome racism in the churches against the young adolescent in their midst. That authentic unity is inclusive and requires racial justice within the life of the churches, the leaders and the youth. From the perspective of the Christian gospel whose mandate is reconciliation of all God's children, racism, internal oppression, stay silent are demonic and sinful. It denies the image of God, given to each person in creation. Jacotte, you may forget me, but I don't forget you. I have been there where you stood up to ask question in members' meeting. The pastor told you to shut up and sit because of your age. I have been there when the pastor kicked you out of the church because you stood up for the young people. I remembered when Maggy, the 16-year-old girl, got pregnant, and they wanted her to sit in the back row of the church because she was insane, and one of the legalists said that she should stay home and you stood up and said: "Sir, were you and your wife married virgin? Where are your children"? The pastor kicked all of the youth out of the meeting and said: "From now on, we will not allow any young person in members' meeting. Jacotte, I have been there. I don't know how you resist. . . . As a high school teacher, I really feel sorry for the Haitian children. I believe that soon, we will not have any in the Haitian churches. I hear their cry for being free in the Haitian churches.

Suzanna a 32-year-old lawyer said: “We need to have a unified voice to sound before the Haitian leaders.” Too many young professional adolescents are leaving the community because of being voiceless. Fellowship must be the basis for associational relationships.

I- Parents/Caregivers, Adult of Haitian Background

Luc, a 26-year-old male said:

Most of the leaders in my church have a misconception about young Christian adolescents. They think that because you are the child of a Christian parent, you are perfect. When the time came for me to go to church, my parents would have to force me and my siblings to go, especially to a Haitian church. They would line us up and comb our hair to get ready and we couldn't say a word. Sometimes you know the pastor was wrong, but you had to be silent. They always thought that I was saved and a good boy, no way. Well, I was about 18 years of age when that happened. After I left the Haitian churches and attended some services at some American church, I began to understand the Word of God, and then I bring my life to Christ.

Roland, a police officer who used to attend Haitian church and now is no longer in the Haitian churches, stated:

Our young Haitian American children are facing many problems in the Haitian churches, such as arrogant leadership, favoritism, voicelessness, lack of structure, communication styles, and frequent disagreement with the leaders about their clothes, their music, their perspective on what church is, and Sunday school class with some unfit teachers. There are horrors in the Haitian churches. I was born and raised in them. You know what, until I see changes, I will not go back. Don't get me wrong, I love my people, but they need to think that oppressions are over. We are not in Haiti, no more Duvalier's regime here. They need to relax. Nobody needs their space nor their seat. Imagine a child who has been sexually assaulted, they come to church with her; they are not even equipped to give her counseling. While all they do with our money is sending their children to universities out of state. They never recognize the youth for their work, no word of encouragement, except they always talk about their children. No! I am out. I feel for the youth, and their oppression. I agree for them to exit so they can seek for the true Gospel.

(5) Internal Oppression or Dictatorial Leadership: is the unjust exercise of authority and power by one group over another. It includes imposing one group's belief system, values and life ways upon another group. Internalized oppression means the oppressor doesn't have to exert any more pressure, because we now do it to ourselves and each other. Divide and conquer works. It is the use of brainwashing, mind control, indoctrination, oppression, coercion, intimidation, legalism, and other bondage techniques to control members and obtain more money. It is the desire for more power, control and money.

As long as we continue to ignore oppression, we run the risk of being encouragers of oppression. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Injustice will thwart all goodness and righteousness if we allow it to continue unabated. We must approach the powerful evil of injustice with the swift and mighty hand of the Word of God that says, "The Lord will quickly grant justice to those who continually cry out for it" (Luke 18:8 NRSV). It is the call of Scripture that we aid the oppressed and work as advocates for those maligned in our society because Paul reminds us that in the kingdom of God "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28 NRSV). If we are to embody the nature of those who are baptized into Christ, we must fight the oppressive forces (people) in our churches that say by their words and deeds, "There are male and female, there are blacks and whites and browns, and there are gays and straights." Oppression has affected the spirituality of our Haitian adolescents.

A- Haitian American Youth

Santana, a 22-year-old Haitian American college student said during our interview: “I have been in the Haitian churches all my life. Now I am about to leave due to the pastor’s dominating spirit. He does not listen to us. When he has a member meeting, we can’t talk. He demeans and degrades the youth. He crushed our spirit and we are forced to submit to the church will. Most of the young people who were in that church left already. I am next.”

An important note that was reflected in the field notes was one of the participant’s sudden changes in facial expression when he related conversations about his interactions with his pastor, and he said, “the Haitian youth are drowning in a river of tears, too much water and not enough bridges in the community. What is so sad is that those you would expect to help you are the ones who create problems for you.” He went on to say, “

We are the church of tomorrow. I would expect if there is a meeting in the church, I am baptized, in college, respect myself, always in Bible study but yet, when they have their meeting, the fact that I am a young adolescent means I can’t ask any question, especially if it is related to church government. They are not organized, that church has a committee but only the pastor can talk. If we come with baggy pants, it is a problem here. My sister wears her jewelries or her fake hairs. The pastor will tell you that she can’t sing or go on the pulpit. Although we try to understand what they preach, but it is not everything we can hear and understand. Nevertheless, I still stay in their midst because of my parents’ rules so my school can be paid. As soon as I am through with school, I will be out. Miss Jacotte, trust me. My heart is no longer in the Haitian churches. I am sick and tired of their problem with the youth to stay silence.

As he was voicing this, his body tensed up, he rubbed his hands and his facial expression became sad and angry for a moment. This I felt was important to note.

Joanne Samson, a 19-year-old Haitian American youth during an in-depth interview stated: “The way our Haitian churches is set up . . . Youth aren’t allowed to

think for the church program or the church itself. Their thinking is only one way, the way they want it, that's the way it should be done . . .” This presents a stark picture of the pervasive nature of the exodus in many of our lives, our views as to its causes and our recommendations for prevention. The unique thing about most of the Haitian churches throughout the Diaspora is that, up until now, our voices have not been heard; there is still a disease in the Haitian churches, which is “Silence Disorder.” If our voices have been heard at all, they have not been respected or acted upon. We believe that the exodus of the youth can be reduced or stopped only when our voices, opinions and experiences are given credence and value. We must be a part of the solution; just by listening to us, the Haitian churches as a whole can come much closer to solving a complex problem that affects everyone, regardless of age. As a community, we must create sustainable changes at the very heart of our churches to ensure a future that is marked less by the exodus and silence and more by respect. Today, Joanne stated, “I reflect the voices of the Haitian American youth from a variety of different backgrounds. Some of us live with our families in the urban centers. Some of us are the ZOES on the street of Little Haiti. Some of us are parents of young children at an early age. Most of us are singles.”

Johney, a twenty-five-year-old college student, stated during an interview:

Our Haitian pastors should have proper motives. By motives, I mean a God-given will to serve freely, not for money, earthly rewards, or recognition. Since knowledge is vain apart from love, a pastor should make love the #1 priority, not knowledge, “Knowledge puffs up, love edifies.” I, being a youth minister at one time, have spent many days with my pastor who spends a lot of time in his office, rather than serving as the word minister (slave) is defined. I have a genuine anger toward the Haitian pastors for their laziness and failure to work outside their church in the community where they belong. What makes me more upset is the fact that most of them do not even have a high school education. They think they are smart. They are abusing their power by subtly pressuring the youth to be perfect and placing the burden of the law

back on people's shoulders, manipulating feelings of insufficiency that make people depend more on church than they do on God. Internal oppression: is when someone thrusts the yoke of bondage upon us.

On December 1 2004, when we interviewed Mr. Kefny in Montreal, he stated:

"Everywhere we go, the Haitian churches dominate and rule with intimidation. They are unjust and they use their religious and social authority over the youth to gain their will over us. As a young talented Haitian American, I am forced to suppress my needs, my talents, my feelings and my actions."

One of the ZOE youth stated: "The Haitian church leader degrades us. We go to the church to find relief from drugs, alcohol, pornography and other evils things that we do. But when we get to the churches, we see there is more oppression and discrimination than the street. Only the leader's children are in honor. They zombified us; they enslaved us; they forced a heavy burden of cruelty on us. They looked at us and we are judged. They inflicted a gaping wound on us. We are crying for our freedom."

J- Principals, Teachers, Businessmen

Haitian Community leaders: Principals, Teachers, Businessmen, identified Haitian youths as their number one concern and priority. They worried that too many were both losing touch with their Haitian roots in church and succumbing to prejudice by being alienated from their Haitian churches and American society. Oppression is expressed in many ways by those community leaders. The participants in this study all talked about some form of discrimination, internal oppression and or dictatorship in the churches that the Haitian American youth have been experienced or in the negative image about

Haitian pastors which affect the Haitian youth comfort level in being in the Haitian churches.

James the Principal stated: The Haitian churches must understand that we are no longer in Papa Doc time, oppression is no longer acceptable. The Haitian American youths are being oppressed by their teachings, model of operations etc. . . listen to that” I grew up in the Haitian churches, since my parents were ministers. I gave my life to Christ when I was thirteen. I truly loved Him throughout my teenage years. However I could not wait for the famous age eighteen so I could have the freedom to “come and go as I pleased”. My pastors implant in me that I have to live holy or I go to hell. When my eighteen year met me in college, I did just that. I took my freedom. I love God, I felt the need to take a break from the Haitian Churches. Specially they (leaders of the churches) always said that the youth could not participate in their staff or member meetings. I always wonder why do they take our tithing. . . anyway, misdiagnosing a patient can carry grave consequences for the medical profession. Most of the Haitian pastors must realize that there is a serious problem threatening the future of our Christianity, that is leaders giving the Haitian youths the wrong prescription for their deep-rooted issues. Haitian leaders must understand that God has created us as a multi-dimensional beings. It means that we can’t pretend that the intellectual, social, emotional and physical aspects of our life do not exist. To remain oblivious to this knowledge is to slowly construct a disastrous interior bomb! When it goes off, it produces anger, resentment, depression and even violence. They can no longer go on having church the way they accustomed to.

High School teacher said: there are deep-rooted issues that are destroying the lives of those who come to church regularly. Those who are in leadership positions are also victims. Teenage pregnancy for church-going youth is not any less than the non church

goers. Have you ever stopped to ask, why are the young men leaving the church for an alternative lifestyle or to go to the American churches? Much like our Haitian churches must begin to seriously think of developing effective counseling ministries instead of feeling threatened by the professionals.

Dr. Edna said that: In Haiti previously oppressive government, questioning authority and free thought were viewed as threat to the state and discouraged. Now in the Diaspora same thing is happening in the most of the Haitian churches. The pastors are being very oppressed, the children cannot voice their opinion, they can't say anything. Their expression are limited and circumscribed, the consequences for challenging the pastors are dire.

K- Parents/Caregivers, Adult of Haitian Background

Mr. Colin, a mechanical engineer who owned his own mechanic shop and who used to be a deacon of one of the Haitian churches which he refused to mention, during an interview at his Garage on December 14th 2004 at 10:00 AM stated:

I have ten children. The leaders are the cause for all of them to leave the Haitian churches. They used to dance and sing in the church. Their integration with the church was interesting and challenging. The leaders made it exquisitely impossible for them to stay. They are dictators, they don't respect the youth, don't accept them for who they are. They were all U.S. born. Language in the church became a problem for them. Pressure from the key leader who is the pastor was another issue for them.

The Haitian leaders don't give to the Haitian American adolescent their best and brightest. They reserve them for themselves and their biological children. There is not much question that when I look for youth leaders who are creative, imaginative, free and theologically challenging in the Haitian churches, they tend to leave the community or it would be the pastor's biological children and yet after a certain age they leave the church. It is difficult to attract the very best youth leader when that's the reality.

A matter that seemed to dominate our tenure at the Haitian churches is the issue of money and church financial affairs. Would you comment on the criticism you received personally during the time that you were the head of the deacons regarding money?

No question that the most difficult issue I faced personally as the head of the deacon board, mainly during my last two years, were the financial problems of the church. Perhaps it was the most misunderstood issue of the time in which I was there. The Church's finances are highly politicized. It's very, very hard for people to understand the finances of the Church and its budget. It's even hard for those who manage the Church. Only the pastor's name was on the accounts of the church. No one was allowed to ask questions. In other words, it was chaos. There was always conflict with the pastor and the board for money. Much of the discussion of finances flowed from the power struggle between the board and the pastor

An informant commenting on the exodus of the Haitian American youth stated:

Les enfants Haitiens sont très intelligents, avec regret ils nous laissent aux Eglises Haitiennes à cause de nos leaders qui sont incompréhensibles et insensibles à leur égard.

{Children of Haitian background are very intelligent, regretfully, we are losing them in our Haitian churches due to the incomprehensibility and insensibility of the leaders.}

Another informant speaking on the issue of the exodus of the Haitian American youth commented:

Leader Haitian yo pral regretter yon jou. Yo opprresser yo trope, yo pa ba yo droit bouche yo.

{Haitian leaders will regret the youth one day. They oppress them too much, and they don't give freedom to talk.}

Another informant insisted during the interviews:

*Timoun Ayisyen gen respé pou Pasté, yo byénelve, ce cak fé pasté
yo tribilé yo konsa. Yo fé byen allé koté ki respecté yo*

{Our children respect the pastors, they are polite. That is why they oppress them so much. I agree with those who exit us and go to places that respect them and also needs their talents.}

Another informant stated:

*Tonton Macoute pa a la mode enko, se pou pasté respecté ti moune
yo. Ti moune nou yo konnin plus passé ampil nan yo. Yo pé. Cé
nan Etat Unis nous yé, nou pas Haiti.*

(We are no longer in the time of Tonton Macoute (Duvalier Regime). The pastors need to respect the youth. Our children know better than most of them. They are afraid. This is the United States not Haiti.)

The following unpublished and untitled poem was shared with me by Jocelyne, an interviewee who is a 19-year-old female. In it, she asks us to turn to our inner selves and search for the beauty within. When uncovered, this beauty shines and nourishes the soul and opens the door to everlasting peace and happiness:

What's wrong with us
Our greed and lust
Blocks our narrow way
Each and every day
Open your wounded eyes
And show the world your smiles
Love each other as you should
Peace of man and brotherhood
What's the point of being through
It all ends in blood, isn't there enough
Take a stroll through your mind
Open some doors, see what you find
In the center of mine, I found a smile
I felt so good, I stayed awhile
Soaring like a shooting star
Just believe in who you are
Burn as hot and as bright
As the stars above that we see at night
Because like them we have our time
You have yours and I have mine

Live and grow without any doubt
And may your inner flame never burn out.

The feeling expressed by this young woman exemplified maturity and intellect. This young woman asked us to turn into our mind and uncover beauty and light. She also suggested that adolescents should know their identity and believe in it. Adolescents have their time during which their inner beauty can flourish and this will enable them to “. . . live and grow without any doubt and may your inner flame never burn out.”

Haitian teens use poetry to express their views, feelings and experiences. Haitian teens living in the U.S. want to voice their views about culture, being blacks, being bilingual, and being oppressed in the Haitian churches. Marie Michelle wrote the following poem in 1995. At the time, she was thirteen years old and had been in the Haitian churches all of her life. This poem is about not forgetting. It's about pride and patriotism.

IF WE FORGET

If we forget
Who will share our pride

If we forget who will celebrate our ancestors
Toussaint Louverture
Jean Jacques Dessalines

If we forget
Who will remember
Katherine Flon
Our flag
Our independence
Our memories
If we forget
What can we do not to forget
What can we do
To make a difference
And make our country and churches
A better place to live in and to be.

The Haitian American youths participants reflected on their pride about various things related to Haiti, and the Haitian churches. One of these is the Haitian Pop Group the Fugees. In 1997 this hip-hop group won a Grammy award. During a performance at the Grammys, Wyclef Jean, the lead singer of the group, wrapped himself in the Haitian flag, an image that was broadcast across the world and left deep impression going to go. Wyclef says he loves Haitian youths and it is his responsibility to help them in every way that he can. "If I can help them be proud of themselves tomorrow they go to school with a different self-esteem, and it's going to help them accomplish what I've accomplished"⁹⁹ the influence of the Fugees came through loud and clear in this study. Many participants said that: Since the Fugees came out, we are no longer ashamed to be Haitian, we just can't understand the full language specially at church when the pastors and or the leaders are preaching in French."

Other sources of pride that were mentioned by these participants are two basket ball players who were drafted by the National Basketball Association: Olden Polynice who plays for the Seattle Sonics and Mario Elie who is with the San Antonio Spurs. Naphtalie talked with excitement about Garcelle Beauvais who is a model and played in Modeis Inc. she said that: Mom I watch that show every week.

The next poem reflects the struggles that Haitian children endure because of the color of their skin. The poem is entitled, "I Want Freedom." It was written by Jojo, a Haitian young man. At that time he was sixteen years old.

Being black and Haitian is hard in America
I am happy to be a black Christian kid
Not everyone loves it, but I do

Being a black Haitian kid in America
Is very dangerous
There are many dangerous things that could happen
Kids in America are struggling
Especially the ones that are not Americans
Being black in America is tough

If being just a black Haitian kid is so hard
Why do I have to be oppressed
By my own ancestors in church
A place of freedom

Some people say
Blacks were made to be slaves
That hurts my feeling as a black Haitian

⁹⁹ Wyclef, 1998, p 10A

If I was in my country
I wouldn't be treated like that

Oops! I don't know about that
Being voiceless in the Haitian churches
Oops! I just don't know

I want freedom
For all my life
No matter where I go
I want freedom
Freedom!
Freedom!
Freedom!

These poems written by Haitian American adolescents are reflective of their maturity and understanding of the Haitian struggle. These children express the understanding about the influence and the importance of knowing about their ancestors and the need not to forget. The poem about freedom speaks to ethnicity identity and the oppressive power in the Haitian churches. It also reflects this young man's search and understanding of how people see him. These adolescents demonstrate an ability to comprehend abstract concepts as explained in Piaget's stage of formal operation.

We noticed that Jesus was a troubled adolescent. He had conflict demands. At the age of twelve, Jesus was ready for a change, ready to function at a different social level within his culture, for example, by discussing the law with adult members of the community. We know that adolescence is a cultural phenomenon. The more complex a culture becomes, the longer adolescence tends to be as adulthood brings more responsibilities and more demands. The fact that most of the Haitian churches and leaders are completely inflexible means symptoms are likely to arise in their midst.

Jesus reached out for the youth, but most of the leaders in our community pushed the Haitian American youth away from their congregation. There are senses of injustice,

loss of identity, and alienation in the Haitian churches. But just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from being scarred by tragic experiences so that they would not have any lasting negative effects, God with His love and compassion will transform the youth.

One of the dilemmas many of the young Haitian American youth are facing today is trying to function productively while bearing the injuries the leaders inflict. Often, in order for them to survive in the Haitian churches, they retreat into a safe place within themselves that helps to shield their emotions, but at the same time, stunts their emotional growth. They appear to be normal in the churches but deep in their body they are there because of parents. The distress of these situations often causes them to feel confused. The exodus of the Haitian American children is everywhere within the Diaspora. It feels overwhelming. The exodus of the Haitian American children is a much larger problem than a people recognize. It is something deeply entrenched in most of the churches that is nearly impossible to avoid. The exodus is everywhere, from the music that they play at church to the clothes that they wear on Sunday morning. We believed that the silence disorder might actually reinforce the exodus. Being constantly voiceless creates unrest and anxiety that can become a foundation for the exodus. The picture of Jesus in the temple is fascinating according to Luke 2:46. "He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." Jesus was among of a group of people much older than himself, but these scholars of the law were fascinated by him. We observe that Jesus was listening to them and asking questions. He was not passively accepting everything the experts said, nor was he showing off his knowledge. Jesus had obviously learned the art of dialogue. Jesus learned to say what he had to say without being silenced, disregarded, or embarrassed. There was space and permission for children

at His age to express their ideas and feelings. In our Haitian churches, even the community leaders are aware that our Christian adolescents are scared, confused and fretful.

Observation of the four main churches

These quotes indicate the high estimation by caregivers and parents given to the suffering of the Haitian American adolescents in the Haitian church, which are the main causes for the exodus of the children.

While visiting the Haitian churches, the writer observed that all members seemed to be related. Although it is not unusual to see blood and fictive kin joining one Haitian church in the community, this is an extraordinary case. Eighty percent of the church members were consanguineal kin. Fifteen percent were friends and fictive kin. Only five percent were not related. There were no members of any other ethnic group. The church service was in Haitian Creole.

After observing the commonality of the churches and the strong social ties among more than one hundred adults, the writer asked some of the Haitian American youth about the relationships between the leaders and the youth. The youth's knowledge in this regard was remarkable. They explained some of their ties with the leaders and the struggles in their midst.

An example that supports the study hypothesis is the case of Linda and Brenda (pseudonyms). Linda and Brenda are twin sisters, 19-year-old female Haitian Americans who have been in America since they were five years old. Linda and Brenda told me that they got much help from the American church. The American people communicated in English. They attend their services on Wednesday. After talking to Linda and Brenda

separately, the data shows that Haitian churches are failing the Haitian American children due to their bicultural or language barrier. The researcher observed that the social network of the churches does not help the youth to do well in the churches. Their Sunday school class teachers do not express themselves in English, so the youth do not understand much of the lesson.

After Linda and Brenda's example, the researcher reviewed some findings from Chapter Four to reinforce the key findings. I identified these based on the participant's views (caregivers, children, teachers, or school administrators). Then I talked about divergent opinions and miscommunication between the church leaders and the youth. I also addressed this cultural difference between the leaders and the youth, pointing out some of the problematic issues I observed. The five variables (Bicultural, Centrality; Culture Clash/Culture Shock, and Internal Oppression) are the major components in this study. They point out the difficulties and controversial issues that the Haitian American adolescent is facing.

This study observed that the five variables (Bicultural, Centrality; Culture Clash/Culture Shock, and Internal Oppression) identified are never addressed in the Haitian churches. The data shows that all the participants agreed that those variables exist in the Haitian churches and they are the main causes of the exodus.

One observation I have made about Haitian churches is that there is an obsession with numbers. Haitians love to gather numbers and compare the size of their congregations. The pastors with the biggest churches seem to have the greatest influence among their peers. This obsession with numbers cannot be healthy. Which army would you rather have? Gideon's first army or his last? No church, and no denomination, should call itself healthy unless more people attend than are on the roll. Judith, a 19-year-old

Haitian American who exited the Haitian church says, “Haitian leaders would be closer to the revival they desire if they would admit their failure, humbly hang their heads, and seek to rectify their awful hindrance to God’s blessing. When we boast of how big we are, we are bragging about our shame.”

How many churches boast about their shame? How many pastors are respected for what they should be ashamed of? The Haitian churches have incredible potential. But there is such a rottenness in the churches that surely they are achieving only a tiny piece of this potential. Magdala, a care giver, said that the exodus of the Haitian American children from the Haitian churches may be a great opportunity for Haitian leaders in the churches to begin shaking off their shame and to recover a biblical perspective on adolescents as members in their congregations.

The majority of adolescents were satisfied with the American churches that they attended, although several expressed considerable ambivalence. Many had hoped they would benefit more for themselves. They were satisfied that they are progressing well in the American churches. The change in social status when compared to Haitian churches has resulted in happiness.

During my observation, one cannot miss those Haitians American who have not yet been assimilated into the Haitian services. In the morning services, they pack the “Haitian American Hall” where they speak English exclusively. The Haitian Haitian adolescents wear dress pants, cotton-buttoned down shirts with ties. Girls wear long skirts or suits. The Haitian American adolescent has a different dress style. They wear baggy shirts in muted colors and Bugle Boy jeans with a neat pleat. They also wear several gold chains, perhaps a necklace with a large wooden pendant shaped like the continent of Africa, a fancy looking watch, and, for some, a cell phone. While the service is on, many

of them hang out in the back or the courtyard of the church with a group obviously uninterested in the Haitian service. They are there because their parents forced them. Martine rarely speaks Creole and refuses to come inside the church. Martine got into a conflict with one of the ushers because she refused to get inside the church. During the service, not an English word was said for those who did not speak Creole. The language barrier deters the Haitian American adolescent from directly participating in the services and church activities. They frequently do not know enough Creole to participate to the fullest.

While many Haitian American adolescents in the Diaspora assimilate to African American churches and culture, they do so with ambivalence. They bring their culture into the African American churches, who accepted them with it. Haitian American adolescents want to be themselves. The African American church has been in solidarity with the Haitian adolescents. They accept them as they are and for who they are. One informant said that the only way a Haitian adolescent can be free from the Haitian pastor is to leave his congregation.

The struggle against racism, language barriers, culture shock, dictatorship, and silence disorder in our midst disassociates Haitian Americans from the Haitian pastors and churches. In a group discussion with the Zoe's, they argued: "Christ did not come on earth and die for us just to be able to fill an auditorium for someone. The way the Haitian leader treat us is wrong, you know it's wrong!"

One way Haitian Americans and African Americans express their solidarity is through an assertion of common faith. I became interested in the interview of Jocelyn, the Haitian American adolescent who left the Haitian church because of the freedom that he enjoyed by not being there. The intensive knowledge that he gained from the American

churches in a short period of time and the comparison that he made between the two raised my curiosity.

Jocelyn, a 17-year-old male, was not allowed to go to an American church. Four months ago, he started to lie to his parents who are the head deacon and deaconess of the church that he attended, by saying that he has a night class every Wednesday night in his school, while a friend introduced him to an American church who held their youth service on Wednesday evening. Unluckily, he got caught up by his mother, who was enraged. He finally stood up and said he refused to attend the Haitian services because he does not understand them. As a consequence, the father took the car key away from him and told him that he is the head of the household and it is a dictatorship in the house. Every one in the church knows that he is a backslider.

This is an example of a child who had difficulties at home and at church. He is dealing with language barriers and internal oppression. “I refuse to go to your church. I am not in Haiti. You just can’t force me. I hate your Haitian churches. You never listen to me . . .” these words were spoken by an adolescent who is experiencing difficulties with his parents and his leaders at church. This child finally works his freedom out.

Junior, the son of a Deacon in the Haitian churches, said: “Since your experience and my experience in a Haitian church is similar, then I guess your comments cut both ways . . . It’s always easy to point across the aisle . . . much harder to humbly state what is wrong in our own churches . . .”

“Ouch,” said Similien, a store manager who exited the Haitian churches. “The problem is far worse, as the Haitian leader almost sounds too grandiose for the Youth, now we are in spiritual decline that prompts words like ‘crisis’ as a description . . . ‘living in judgment’ is another.”

Cherfils, a young pastor, stated:

Being a Pastor in the Haitian church, I do agree there are numerous problems that are rampant in our church. We have numerous lazy and apathetic leaders and pastors filling our church membership rolls. That being said, I am not sure if I completely agree with the approach taken by you, Jacotte, and some commenters here to completely agree that we are the main cause for the exodus of the youth. Nevertheless there is some truth in it, but, as a Pastor, I can't completely agree with you. . . . I respect your opinions and I understand the frustration. I deal with it constantly, but I think all Haitian Christian leaders need to wake up and evaluate the complacency around us and in us, not just in one group in our midst, which is the youth.

Cecile an informant went on explaining the difficulties she has between adolescents and the leaders. She could not do everything for the Zoë's by herself, she explained: "If I had time like the pastors and their wives who do not work, I would use it to help the Haitian American adolescents with their struggling in the Haitian churches. Those children have a language barrier; the leaders are not trying to help them. I wonder if it's because of intimidation or ignorance or incompetence . . ."

I asked the candidates about what they really want from the Haitian churches. They responded that they want to have their voice heard, they want to be respected for who they are, and they want to be included in the church as members. In this response one can see that if the Haitian American youths have their voice heard, the exodus will stop and those who left will come back.

Analysis of the next questions I asked the candidates shows that they are what Cole would call an "engaged" person.¹⁰⁰ Engaged persons are described as "those who choose to talk, talk widely for enjoyment and information, use strategies when needed,

¹⁰⁰ Cole 2002, 3.

and talk in order to understand themselves and others better.”¹⁰¹ In addition, these responses can be used to analyze aspects of metacognition as described by Vacca.¹⁰²

Vacca

tells us of components of metacognition, including self-knowledge, task knowledge and self-monitoring in the Haitian churches. My candidates’ responses show evidence for understanding at each of these levels.

In the next question, my candidates were asked to describe their struggles in the Haitian churches. They responded that struggles were the power points of the Haitian leaders. It was a pattern repeated since slavery. This response shows an understanding of silence disorder. In regards to Vacca, this response has direct correlation with the self-knowledge component of metacognition. As described by Vacca, self-knowledge is composed of an understanding of what story is for and what the role of the storyteller is in addition to other aspects.¹⁰³ Through their responses, it can be seen that some of our candidates see purpose in telling their stories and understand their role as a storyteller to learn and to bring transformation so their voice can be heard.

Candidates also responded to questions outlining their understanding of Haitian culture. They spoke of culture shock, culture clash, language barriers, linguistic problems, internal oppression, silence disorder and church government. At church, they described themselves as unwanted. They also described the leaders as authoritarian. These responses once again demonstrated an in-depth and developed understanding of who they are in general as well as the connection between leaders (shepherds) and members

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Vacca.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

(sheep). They see communication as an important part of understanding what one has to say and as an important method for transformation.

Overall, the responses that the candidates gave during their in-depth interviews allowed an in-depth understanding of their skills and motivations as members in the congregations. They showed a positive attitude and much motivation toward staying in the Haitian churches in general. They seemed to be confident in their life storytelling experiences and therefore were willing and able to describe each fully. In addition, one could tell that the candidates valued the Haitian churches and culture. They practice their culture and informed others about it. Through these observations, one could see that the life story telling of the Haitian American youth in the areas of self-knowledge, task knowledge and self-monitoring in the Haitian churches will most likely continue to develop in this trend.

As Dr. Boomersshine describes, the church story model of ministry is, first and fundamentally, a process for learning stories of a local church.¹⁰⁴ After my in-depth interviews, I could agree more with that statement. In-depth Interviews most certainly do help a researcher better understand a candidate's struggles, interests and attitudes, how candidates perceive their strengths and weaknesses, and how they perceive processes related to language barriers. I believe that interviews could prove an extremely effective and beneficial method in the Haitian churches.

I feel that my hopes for positive outcomes of the interviews were readily met. This interview experience helped me successfully complete another step in accomplishing the objectives and thus another step in the process of becoming a leader. Through these

¹⁰⁴ Boomersshine, *Story Journey*, 66.

interviews, I furthered my understanding of numerous principles and concepts in limitation, church education, culture shock, culture clash, and the role of a leader. It also revealed a positive attitude on what it means to be a leader. In addition, I feel that having had this experience with the Haitian American youth through their life stories, it also prepared me to feel confident when using this technique, in combination with others, to organize and manage youth programs in my own ministry. From this experience, I learned that, when I approach Haitian American youth, I must be patient, observant and open-minded. As a leader, the Haitian youth are looking to me for guidance and likely to pick up on any sort of negative attitude I express toward them and their peers. This would not reflect well on me as a professional leader and would only cause tension in the ministry. Diversity is a blessing and, when we learn to embrace differences, society will be better off. This field experience opened my eyes to the world of the Haitian American adolescents in the Haitian churches and community. Field experience is the greatest way to learn how the system used with the Haitian American should be and to get real leader reaction to the changes that are occurring in our system today.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

*“We are stumbled, but have not fallen.
We are ill-favored, but we still endure.
Every once in a while we must scream this as far as the
Wind can carry our voices:
We are ugly, but we are here! And here to stay.”¹⁰⁵
Edwidge Danticat.*

A Haitian American youth would not have a problem discovering a Haitian church anywhere they go in the Diaspora. Anyone who listens can usually hear a Creole-speaking Haitian church on almost every corner in Miami. Most of these churches are not owned by the Haitian congregations. Bicultural, Centrality, Culture Clash/Culture Shock, Internal Oppression and silence disorder are the triggers of the youth exodus.

The Haitian churches' dilemma reveals the strengths and limitations of a nascent church constitutional democracy in a society torn by class war. The exodus movement in the Diaspora is an effort to sweep away the old orders. As the movement has discovered, the roots of internal oppression and silence disorder of the youth run deep. They are grounded in the Haitian churches' centuries old silence disorder to avert profound structural change by stilling voices, at times overtly and at times covertly.

As some of the Haitian American youth languished because of the failure of some of their leaders, Source of Life Ministry focused on the role of the Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches and to give them voices in our midst.

¹⁰⁵Charles Arthur, *Haiti in Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics, and Culture* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing Group, 2002), 70.

Adolescence is the period of life for both growth and discovery. It is also that period in our lives when we challenge our boundaries and attempt to define both ourselves and the surroundings in which we live. The newfound freedoms of the teen years also bring the newfound responsibilities of early adulthood. Charles says, “This period of life is one of profound change and development.”¹⁰⁶ Groome says, “One essential element in our development as a Christian is our understanding that authentic freedom always turns us towards God.”¹⁰⁷

Haitian American youths are challenging all that has been taught to them about life and Christianity. Most of our leaders are not prepared for that challenge and feel threatened in their comfort zone, so they refuse to facilitate the youth’s development in a positive manner. The Haitian American youth want to adjust to their newfound freedoms in life; and yes, sometimes they may have a rough transition in the adjustment. Leaders need to be there to help them grow in this freedom and more fully understand the responsibilities that accompany this freedom. The Haitian youth are growing quickly and many new ideas and concepts are emerging. They are no longer in Haiti; they know and understand what freedom means. Most of the leaders are not fostering that growth and are not attempting to help them become the great masterpieces that God has designed them to be. Most of our leaders are standing in the way of the youth development by oppressing them.

This project has attempted to recognize the hurt of some of the participants, to embrace it, and to offer hope for healing. Additionally, this project hopes to raise

¹⁰⁶ Charles M. Shelton, *Morality and the Adolescent: A Pastoral Psychological Approach* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), particularly chapters 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Groome, *Educating For Life* (Allen, TX: Thomas Moore, 1998).

awareness regarding the exodus of the Haitian American youth due to the exclusionary practices of some of our churches and to offer creative responses which engender and restore hope as our participants are renewed. Traversing these millennia, the lengthy and sordid saga of Haitian American youth in the Haitian churches has been fraught with the vilification of youth, the abuse of power, dramatic lapses in veracity, disempowerment, and even misogyny. The sad, harsh reality remains that regardless of giftedness, education, and call to ministry, and in spite of the progress that has been made, the “rules” in the Haitian exclusively pastor-dominated hierarchy relegate youth to be silent in the churches; therefore, you are in the back of the bus. Nevertheless, in the face of the disillusionment, disheartenment, and even despair, there is hope, a hope rooted in the redemption of Jesus Christ, a hope sustained by the power of His cross, and a hope proclaimed by the essential message of salvation in His Good News. This hope is courageously and poetically expressed in the poem “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou.

Though hope is a very fragile spark within the human person, it is also the blazing flame of passion that enables ordinary people to overcome adversity and to realize great dreams. The oppression of the Haitian American youth is a sad reality in the Haitian churches. Even in our own historical time and within the Haitian Christian religious tradition, the roles of youth in salvation history have been minimized. Holy youth have been wretchedly disregarded and, at times, relegated to being characterized as unjust, unthinking, and foolish. It is very difficult to write these statements about my own people and religious tradition. I have suffered, and continue to suffer, greatly with the judgments these words have brought to me. However, my words do not reflect merely isolated events or personal experiences, nor are they representative only of my perceptions. Rather, my findings are an expression of the insights that arise from my personal

experiences and the stories of the Haitian American youth that I interviewed as well as the knowledge and wisdom I have gained in Bible school, religion classes, and graduate level Scripture courses. Like Martin Luther King Jr., I, too, dream of a day when Haitian American youth will not be judged, oppressed and voiceless by their pastors or authorities of their church because of their age, but rather by the strength of their character, the compassion within their hearts, their dedication to the spiritual quest, and the gifts and talents given to them by the great Creator God. My dream and my hope are for the youth to be who they are called to be as the People of God working together to become the body of Christ.

The expectations of the youth for most of our leaders in the Diaspora are little different than those who are still in Haiti. From the interviews, I found 90% of them said: “We expect our pastors to act not like lost people, but like Christ. Christians crucified us because we wear jewelry, we wear pants, although we don’t come to church with them; we braid our hair, we get accustomed to American Gospel music, we worship in liturgical dances, we rap, etc. They are saying that we are not saved.”

If a person doesn't know Christ, embrace the value system of scripture and promote the mission of His body, then why are we so surprised and enraged when we encounter a culture which does not embrace our beliefs? For me, the question is not how do I respond, but how do I engage them.

Looking at Christ's example in the New Testament, it is hard for me to imagine Him engaging the Christless culture in such a way. What I see Him doing (the woman at the well) is expressing compassion with a call to “sin no more.” I clearly hear the latter call but always fail to see the first part as Christians interact with the lost community today. The stories the participants shared during their in-depth interviews

overwhelmingly indicated their strong belief in and feelings about the significance of equality of youth in ministry and the necessity of being inclusive. All of the participants expressed the importance of recognizing and raising awareness of the various ministerial roles that youth can fulfill in the Haitian churches, emphasizing the numerous ways that Paul indicates the leadership roles for youth in his undisputed letters. In several of their responses, they specifically stress the importance of having a voice as being the key for them not to leave the church. Also, they want to talk about the major control issue. “Our pastor doesn’t respond well to strong personalities in the church who disagree with him.” We have several young people who like to have a say in things. They feel the pastor's attitude is “my way or the highway.” They don’t accept this and are butting heads. This tension has spilled out into the congregation.

Haitian American adolescents are enraged about internal oppression and being voiceless in the Haitian churches. They have refused to tolerate it. Instead of standing in our churches, shouting at the world from our island “You are wrong! Your evil! We are right!” They would rather move off the island of their faith, dynamite the bridge behind us, engage the culture that we fear and put some “proof” to the “truth” we preach. That proof is compassionate works of service.

I recommend a book called *The Church of Irresistible Influence, Bridge-Building Stories to Help Reach Your Community* by Robert Lewis with Rob Wilkins. This book tells an inspiring story that shows how a church can become an irresistible influence on its neighborhood, community, and world by building bridges over troubled waters to a dying culture through showing the love of God in action. I am a member of this church and have seen first hand this love in action and have experienced the response of our community as we have move into our culture. I remember one elementary school

principal saying, “I’ve been doing this job for over 20 years and this is the first time a church has committed to us to assist us and actually kept their word.” She said this as tears came to her eyes and over 500 volunteers from 10 different churches showed up to transform her school by freely giving time, energy and effort to do a “total school makeover,” replacing carpet, installing new playground equipment, painting, remodeling, and landscaping the entire campus. Those 10 churches earned the right to preach the truth

The exodus of the Haitian American youth is expanding. The loss in the Haitian churches is virtually noticed. In a majority of the Haitian churches in Miami, the number of Haitian American adolescents hovers at approximately 45%. But current trends indicate that these numbers will fall as young Haitian Americans leave the church. While our Haitian leaders are trying to impose culture on them, they totally forget that young people today are constantly exposed through media to many voices and images outside the church and are aware that they have choices in how and when to worship.

This generation really hungers for a church that gives them principles to live by and a community to help them live these principles. Through this research, we realized that most of our churches are not responding. They are very poor in the use of pastoral counseling and youth and young adult ministries, while American churches have made excellent use of these areas and are facilitating growth in ways the Haitian churches have not employed effectively.

Joann Petit, Director of Haitian-American student ministry at Source Of Life Ministry, notes that some other Christian religions are doing a much better job than the Haitian Church at incorporating culturally relevant messages and images into their services. I believe Haitian leaders have to reinvision their faith, their church government, and their church structure, and see themselves in the very making of who the church is. I

don't think it is going to get any better unless the church incorporates different catechesis that brings the Haitian American adolescents into the grandeur of the church.

I see Haitian American young adults leaving the church in large numbers and have found it difficult to find people who genuinely care. Through this research, the researcher found that, for better or worse, it is a matter of the youth being voiceless, the leaders are too dictatorial and the internal oppression is too intense.

I point to the "quiet" racism inherent in some areas of the church as an alienating factor for young Haitian-Americans youth who now have more religious options than ever. Historically, the church is a place where Haitians found refuge from the daily trials of discrimination. Thus, if they are not finding a culturally welcoming atmosphere within their parishes, many young Haitian-Americans know they can find it elsewhere and are not bound by family traditions as their parents have been.

When you have access to the larger world and when you hear compelling testimony from that world, then you make choices. Some make choices to go elsewhere simply because it speaks to their whole person and not just one aspect of their lives.

Doing something right Sixteen-year-old Satara Joseph does not depend on her parents to get her to church or the desire to see her friends to make her want to go. She attends regularly because she loves what she gets from her church.

Satara, who just finished her junior year at North Miami Senior High School (In North Miami Senior High School 90% of the children are Haitian) and attends Miramar High School in Broward, (Miramar is a suburban area] says she wasn't always an avid churchgoer until the American parish's youth programs caught her interest. "My spirituality has grown because of the youth ministry. Now I go to church because I want

to, not because my parents tell me to," she says. "I feel closer to God and feel welcomed in church."

Satara knows her new church makes a special effort to reach out to young people. "The sermons at my new church are very different. Sometimes it's hard to get used to accepting others' way of worshiping. They also speak in a language that I understand. They respect my values and my knowledge. I can ask for a report and no one will feel threatened. The church government is well organized. It is not because of friendship someone is in a position, but it is because of qualification. There are no such of things as dictators. People talk with respect. I can wear anything, and I will feel free to worship because it does not matter."

Identity formation

The key developmental task of adolescence, according to Erickson, is the achievement of a secure identity.¹⁰⁸ For minority youth, ethnicity is an essential component of the identity is vital to a healthy personality. Stuffinan and Davis state that "central to adolescent development is the task of achieving an identity, a subjective sense of sameness and continuity that serves as a guide for one's life."¹⁰⁹

It was discovered that participants in this study could be grouped into two different paths of identity development: identifying as Americans, ethnic Americans with some distancing from black Americans, and mainstreaming an immigrant identity.

¹⁰⁸ Erickson 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Stuffinan and Davis 1990, 54.

American Identity

An American identity characterized the response of five of the respondents. Joachin downplayed his background as Haitian and described himself as American. Self-image was not seen as important to his self-esteem. He stated that he made a conscious decision not to reveal to his new church that he is from Haiti because he did not want to be part of the exodus group in that church. It was embarrassing to him. Most of the participants in this study reported that overall their parents held negative opinions of American Blacks. However, these adolescents either disagreed with their parents' and church's perception or they accepted their characterization as true. Many of them stated that Black American churches are not sanctified. Joachin believed that Black American churches are stereotyped and that ". . . no matter how much they worship and carry themselves, it is never enough."

Ethnic Identity

Twenty other participants adopted a strong ethnic background that involved considerable and deliberate distancing from American Blacks. These respondents felt a strong need to stress their ethnic identities and wanted others to know that they are not American although they attend their congregation. They seemed to agree with their parents' opinions and judgments that there were strong differences between Americans and Haitians and that Haitians are hard working and are "superior" to American Blacks in their behavior and attitudes. All of these adolescents addressed the issues of race relations. Some expressed their parents' view that they have to always conduct themselves in a dignified way because they are ambassadors and anything they do is a

reflection of their belief and Haiti. This appears to be a major burden imposed on these teens. This burden seems to be imposed by their parents, but they also freely accepted this responsibility.

The adolescents in this category try to carry their culture into the American churches that they attend. They did not seem to have a problem with their culture and some of their accents. They stated that they were welcomed with it. The participants stated that they know that because they were always highly respected. They know that because of the color of their skin people would not be able to distinguish them from black Americans, so they have had to devise creative ways to advertise who they are in their midst. They feel strongly about being identified as Haitians. Joceline stated that she has a map of Haiti as part of her key chain so that when people look at her keys they would ask her about it and she could tell them that she is from Haiti. They also stated that they were given opportunities at the American church to celebrate their flag. They put a great deal of emphasis on retaining their own ethnic values and traditions while they are worshipping in the American churches. Natasha stated: "It is not because we want to go and worship there. It is just like they don't have any respect for us at the Haitian churches. We love them, but education is a must, language is a problem, culture is a big deal. Now we are truly free to worship and we better understand their theology. Haitian churches always put emphasis on what you wear."

Essential Themes in the Haitian Adolescent's Experience

I Am Here Too

Breath, Eyes, and Memories is the story of Joance, a Haitian novelist. She began writing at a very young age. Her story gives voice, depth, and anguish to the Haitian adolescents that I interviewed. In her book, she describes vividly the lush countryside, cane fields, and rainwater baths of Haiti. Her story also illuminates the beauty and the anguish of family life in the Haitian churches. She describes her distress, fears, voicelessness, and feelings of aloneness and sadness associated with internal oppression in the Haitian churches.

. . . my mother said it was important to attend Haitian churches. Otherwise, I will lose my culture, my self-identity and my salvation, because God will judge me according to my culture. In Sunday school class my teacher will tell me the same thing, and in Creole, a language which I like, but I have great difficulties of understanding every word. My pastor in church meetings or services only speaks Creole. I spent all my life Going to the church and never understood most of the services. I learned the songs, that's about it. I always sleep, and I had no one to talk too because I always had to sit by my parents. I wanted to ask questions, but . . . I was a kid. I wanted to tell my mother that I don't want to go to her church anymore. Finally, I was afraid. I try to think of something to keep me from having to go. Sickness or death was probably the only things that my mother would accept as excuses.¹¹⁰

The themes of isolation and fear were very poignant in Joance's story. They are intertwined and were ever present in the Haitian adolescents' description of their lived experiences in the Haitian churches. Isolation seemed to focus around the loss of interest. Johnny and Antonio expressed fear, which creates a self-imposed isolation. Johnny stated that: "Most of the pastors do not take time to hear you or really know your name. They

¹¹⁰ Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, and Memories* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

are in such a hurry that they simplify your name by taking the first part and dropping the rest. Antonio said:

. . . the way Jesus is, scares me. I hear all the time, if I lie to my parents, I will go to hell. I hear all the time how Jesus always wants people to walk in sanctification. I know I sometimes lie to my parents. I can't even speak to my pastor or the lay leaders in the church. They will go and talk to my parents whom I don't want to know. I don't want to go to hell! This is frightening.

Buckle Your Seat Belt

All of the participants thought that Haitian pastors are more authorities and dictators than American pastors and the Haitian parents believed in them. They reported that they had to deal with their clothing issues, which bother them a lot. Suits must be worn on Sunday mornings, which most of them hate, or they could not go into the pulpit. They decide who they want in their church committee, take it or leave it. They decide how much they get paid; you could not make any comments. They decide who takes the Holy Communion, etc.

Jesula, ex-coordinator of the church's youth ministry program, says that:

A lot of the ritual of the Haitian churches is western, borrowed from the first culture and it is evident in our services. Our leaders need to know that teens and young adults are searching, trying to figure out who they are. And if they are feeling that what's important to them deep down is not getting addressed, they are going to leave. The old African adage that "it takes a village to raise a child" is true.

Conclusion

Our shoulders touch but our hearts cry out for understanding
without which there can be no life and no meaning . . . there must
be found ever-creative ways that can ventilate the private soul
without blowing it away, that can confirm and affirm the integrity
of the person. —Howard Thurman¹¹¹

The world is in a state of change; traditional ways of acting, doing, and behaving are being seriously questioned and may no longer be appropriate. The cumulative effect of world wars, scientific and technological progress, massive revolution and global communication has shaken all institutions. The traditional friction between generations has increased to the point where it seems that we may be in danger of discontinuity between the generations.

For sixty years, Haitian life did not have a geographical home. The continuity of generations was at all times a matter of the Haitian culture and the Haitian people being or not being. It is evident that the transmission of religion, ethics, culture and norms from one generation to the next has been a vital part of Haitian history and Haitian people. Haitian religion, culture, and values are supported, reinforced, and transmitted from one generation to the next by a tight social and religious system. However, today they are affected by the forces of social change that tear at, distort, and subvert traditional Haitian life. Isaiah voiced this fear when he said, “Children I have reared and brought up and they have rebelled against me.” It follows that discontinuity of the generations are resulting in grave problems.

This study has examined the stories of the Haitian American youth from the Haitian churches and community. Every one of the 45 Haitian American youths with

¹¹¹ Thurman, *Inward Journey*.

whom I talked was in the Haitian churches at some extent. Whatever our views of liberation, it becomes important to be aware that all of us “look upon our own liberation and vocation from inside the stories we live every day.”¹¹² Haitian American youths in Miami are not much different from the others in the Diaspora. To live in community is to teach how to build it and how to practice it. Community stands between the impersonalism of mass society and the self-centeredness of individualism. Therefore, we cannot bring people together in ways that simply intensify individualism. Perhaps in a world in which each person had a place and calling, it fulfilled the Christian responsibility to society simply to exhort persons to exercise their offices, but in a world far from orderly, marked by rapid change and drastic reshaping, by mass media and huge bureaucracies, by complexity and perplexity, to settle for privatism or individualism is to promote disorder.

To keep Haitian American adolescents in our community requires compassion for one another, coordination of leadership, painstaking development of communication and dialogue, the creative use of common facilities, and the promotion of many opportunities for formal and informal gathering, embracing every sector: Pastor, administration, staff, youths, deacon. All this must not be left to chance or exhortation, but must be taken into careful account in planning and frequently reviewed. Here we call on imagination and ingenuity. We must find practical ways to respect, accept, love and bridge the gap. Rev. Phillips from Agape Christian Fellowship church, an adjunct professor for Trinity International University, stated:

¹¹² Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon), 30.

I had the privilege of traveling to India last June. The heat in this great part of the world made the daily Florida humidity seem like paradise. Along with the heat came an incredible thirst. As you walked down the streets, you longed for nothing but a refreshing glass of water. Well, the same can be said of our Haitian churches and community: we are thirsty for a refreshing dose of godly leadership in the Haitian churches. Amid all the uncertainty and doubt that surrounds the Haitian church, we can use some difference makers. I have often said and believe that the overall temperature of any institution will never rise above that of the leaders.

Having diagnosed the illness, its symptoms and causes of the Haitian churches, we no longer can see the virus of legalism eradicated in the lives of the Haitian American youths. In Haitian society, children are socialized to be self-reliant, competent, and self-sufficient. However, they are socialized to view themselves as subordinates to lineal family authority and are expected to be unquestionably obedient to parents, older people and religious leaders.

According to the findings of this study, through their life experiences in the Haitian churches, the Haitian American adolescents no longer agree to abide by the dictator's law. In order for us to retain them in our churches and community, they must have mutual respect, they must be counted as an individual to the fullest, and they must be well and highly respected. Learning to think, act, lead and work productively in partnership with the adolescent requires that the leaders give up familiar ways of thinking. It requires the leaders' to design curricula and teaching methodologies that will both assist them socially and spiritually. Rev. Phillips from Agape Christian Fellowship stated: "In order to accomplish great tasks in the community, it is important to understand and realize that leadership is not a position but a process . . . unless the pastors respect the

Haitian American adolescents for who they are, our churches will stay in limbo. Our adolescents need love, respect and acceptance so we can bridge the gap.”

This is an era of restructuring and redesigning for the Haitian churches. It is not only important to prepare services and Bible studies, it is also important to develop strategies that will transform the church leaders, enhance respect for diversity and expand the skills of providers to actualize that respect in the Haitian American adolescents. All Haitian American adolescents exiting the Haitian churches experiences include traumatic disruption in social, psychological and spiritual support systems. The Haitian leaders need to assume a cultural advocacy role with the professionals in the churches, such as: teachers, counselors, psychologists and others. Those clinicians are in an advantageous position when they care for Haitian adolescents because they can rely on common experiences, cultural understanding, and so on. However, Haitian clinicians are not necessarily always available because the number of Haitians with an advanced degree is minimal in the Haitian churches due to the church government. In other words, even the majority professionals do not stay in the Haitian churches.

In the face of this crisis of the “Exodus of the Haitian American adolescents,” we recommend that the Haitian leaders give the youth voices in the Haitian churches. Ms. Carole, the lawyer, said that: “in America there is something call freedom of speech.” The pastor needs to be aware of it. The pastoral theology should not be legislative or prescriptive, but rather it should be interpretative. Joane said, “dictatorship died since Papa Doc died,” also “we are not in Cuba where Fidel Castro rules.” Our leaders need to transform their practice. They need to view their philosophical theology through a performative discipline. We now reach into a new horizon. The deconstruction of foundationalist or dictatorship thought constitutes vital change. Therefore, the findings of

this study suggest that our leaders should reconsider organizing programs for the youth, sitting with the youth on a monthly basis, giving them voices, just like the other members of the church.

Just like Rev. Philips said: “In order for the Haitian leader to accomplish a great task with the adolescents, it is important for them to know and realize that leadership is not a position, but a process.” The author believes that the deep thirst for leadership finds its roots in the ongoing mistake of appointing leaders rather than raising up leaders. Jesus was very careful in not handing out leadership to the 12 men He had chosen until they were properly trained. Peter had to be taught patience. Thomas needed more faith. John was not firm enough. Despite their unwavering commitment to the Lord, they needed to be molded before they could be trusted. It is a sure recipe for disaster to place someone in a position in the church or in an organization without taking the time to teach them how to lead. Most of our Haitian pastors are placed without training. Therefore, frustration occurs, which produces the exodus of the Haitian adolescents. Moreover, it would not be an overstatement to say that our growing evangelical community is in need of godly people of God.

The success of our community rests heavily on our ability to identify and train potential leaders. In identifying a leader there are several key factors that mount to look for the individual’s strengths and weaknesses. Everyone comes with a set of strengths. A strength can be defined as something you do well. People who work in their area of strength usually enjoy a great level of success. Second, it is equally important to invest time and resources in people who show promise, but have certain limitations. We live in a society today where a weakness is often associated with incompetence. A weakness, if carefully managed, can become a strength. Rev. Philips said: “The greatest need in our

Haitian churches with our adolescents is patience and tolerance. The leaders must not be afraid of allowing their apprentices to fail.” Our Haitian leaders have too much pride. Throughout scripture, we read countless accounts of how some of the greatest leaders often failed before succeeding in their ministry.

Generally my primary purpose for this project was to engender hope by embracing the Holy Spirit who is as surely present in the faith communities of today as he was in the Christian communities to whom Paul wrote in the first century. Embracing the example of Paul, who trusted in the charisms and in the workings of the Spirit, engenders openness to honor and utilize the gifts and talents present in all of the Haitian American youth of the Haitian churches and thus facilitate the reclamation of the essential role of the youth in our Haitian churches. This reclaiming graces us with the wisdom and the courage to embrace ever more deeply the great tradition which is our Christian heritage and to proclaim our oneness in Christ to the world. Our unity in Christ is preserved in our sacred and inspired scriptures that state: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” Gal 3:27-28.

After reading one of my many rough drafts of this document, a friend remarked: You’ve really been preparing to write this your entire life.” The depth of her insight into my passion regarding the Haitian American adolescents’ struggles in the Haitian churches was astounding and became an “ah-ha” moment for me, impelling me to hearken to early childhood memories of the many biographies and autobiographies to which I was always attracted as I visited the bookmobile. I read numerous stories of people who struggled against all odds and who overcame adversity. I clearly remember identifying with these amazing women, men and youths whose lives were seemingly thwarted by the

overwhelming obstacles they faced. Yet, an undefined, mysterious inner energy graced them with the ability to demonstrate faith, courage, determination, and hope in the actions of their lives. In my estimation, these were great women, men and youths, a veritable “litany of saints”—Harriet Tubman, Wilma Rudolph, Jackie Robinson, Rosa Parks, Helen Keller, Indira Gandhi, Jesse Owens, Margaret Thatcher, Jim Thorpe, Mildred (Babe) Didrikson Zaharias and Audienne Dada, to name but a few.

Although I attended a Haitian church, the obvious lack of enthusiasm for the youth program called “La Jeunesse” is a vivid memory. Several years ago, when I started the Haitian American youth Congress in Miami, which was televised for the first time, it had deep spiritual implications for me. Reflecting on the significant role that youth activities play in the current cultural context of the Haitian community, I recognized that this event was a defining moment. This defining moment resulted in the community acknowledgment that Haitian American youths had been elevated into the Haitian leader’s consciousness. This was a moment of great hope, a spiritual moment when the youths were being judged, not based on their age, but rather upon the skills, gifts and talents that God had given to them. This reality gave tremendous hope to us and, even more importantly, it dramatically and profoundly rekindled the waning embers of hope that burn deep within.

This entire undertaking has been about overcoming obstacles, about persevering in spite of fear, about being faithful to a spirituality which has been frequently choked and all but extinguished by religion, about the tears of young Haitian American youths who could not understand why they could not be altar servers, and about the pain of the Zoes who time and again have been used and even discarded by a church starving for competent spiritual leadership that embraces our unity in Christ and the discipleship of all

believers, rather than the abuse of clerical power and control. This is not the simplistic, childish banter of “the boys against the girls” or the adult repartee of “male versus female.” Rather, it is the complex paradigm of a spiral where the deeper one moves into the heart of God, the greater one recognizes the sacredness of both adult and youth as created in the divine image.

Essentially this endeavor has been and will continue to be about reviving the embers of hope. In ancient times, as tribes traveled from one place to the next, one of the most important roles was that of the flame bearer. The life of the tribe depended upon the flame bearer for it was the flame that provided the people with warmth and heat for cooking and for simmering healing herbs. It was around this flame that the tribe gathered to share stories, to sing ballads, and to engage in conversation. It is now our sacred task to be the flame bearers within our Haitian communities of faith, to share the life struggle stories of the Haitian American adolescents in the Haitian churches, to blow on the dying embers with our sacred breath reminiscent of the breath of God (*ruah*) so that our Haitian churches may once again become aflame with the divine presence of God’s Spirit.

Open your mouth in behalf of the [mute], and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, decree what is just, defend the needy and the poor. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

As I have entered more fully into this process of theological reflection in relation to freedom and the writings and the relationships of freedom with the people of Israel, I am graced with hope. In the midst of this hope, I have become more acutely aware of my own vulnerability and brokenness as a person and as a minister. Yet the offspring of this struggle is a hope that gives birth to a vision of a church where power resides in weakness and where the community of faith fully embraces the gifts and talents of each young

Haitian American adolescent and, in turn, each member engages her/his gifts and talents for the good of building up the body of Christ, the church.

The mood of life of a youth is one expectation and a pervasive sense of morningness, as when they start a promising day. In the Haitian American churches, the future of the Haitian youth is uncertain because their experiences are to become memories or nearly forgotten experiences that would somehow leave their trace on their being. There is a sense of anticipation and anxiety in the Haitian churches. In contrast, there is a sense of purpose and meaningfulness in life when you attend the American churches. When I, the author, attended a Haitian church as a young person, my existential life worlds, which constituted an intricate, interwoven unity, were shaken and possibly shattered. I was uprooted from what I perceived as a safe and secure environment to a new world without friends, without understanding, and without relationships except in giving. To fit in was to accept disappointment, fear, rejection, oppression, abandonment and pain, which became emotional scars. As a researcher and a successful social worker, I talked about being Haitian with pride. I still have a strong desire to acculturate, to have healthy relationship with the Haitian pastors, and to avoid additional stigmatization and discrimination by the wider society. Haitian leaders need to try to facilitate opportunities for their youth to advance themselves in their churches, to integrate them in the work of the Kingdom. They need to understand the meaning of the experience of the Haitian adolescent living in the U.S. Adolescents is a major age group in the Haitian American churches. They need support, understanding, cooperation, programs, and respect as individuals, attention, and activities in the midst of the Haitian churches. It is important that leaders provide care that is holistic, embracing physical, emotional and spiritual

needs. This needs to be done in concert with cultural awareness, specifically in understanding cultural orientation and their situated context.

Ultimately, the struggles in which we engage and how we face them define who we are. As we grapple with the pain of brokenness, our own, others, and the Haitian American adolescents who are dear to us, and honor the wrenching labor-like pains of broken heartedness and even broken spirits, we give birth to hope. This hope is the hope of both adult leaders and Haitian American youths who yearn for a day when the gifts, talents and leadership of the Haitian American youths will be honored within our church institutions. This hope is reflected in the depth of soulfulness shared by Elie Wiesel, a holocaust survivor, in this powerful insight:

Because protest in itself contains a spark of truth
 A spark of holiness, a spark of God.
 Little does it matter whether our protest is heard;
 But protest we must.
 Because in protesting we show that we care,
 That we listen, that we feel.
 And also we interpret the tale.¹¹³

As a result of the chaos in the Haitian Churches throughout the Diaspora, there is a serious and desperate needs for reformation. Just as the people of God in the Old Testament went through transition for restoration. The Haitian Churches needs a reformation for the restoration of the young people. The remnant that left among the Haitian American youths are subject to an eventual outburst due to their frustration. The state of the church is not prepared for revolt. The church leadership will certainly misinterpret their reactions because they not conscious of the problems that exist among

¹¹³ Elie Wiesel, as quoted in a documentary film, *Jewish Legends*.

the youths. Currently there are the chosen youth among the remnant that are considering such a revolt to number one free themselves and to set an atmosphere for those that are currently going through the suppression in the church, such a revolt would also create an atmosphere for the young Haitian American youths or for future Haitian American youths in the Haitian Churches. In this current dispensation, the emergence of a group of young people tired of the operation the Haitian churches is eminent. Therefore now is the time to awake the consciousness of the Haitian leaders in the Haitian churches. The remnant of the Haitian American youth is too small in the Haitian churches. Again all of the Haitian churches have great worship services, so what! Someone, a young person is suffering inside. Haitian churches is not in the business of restoring people, but they are in a church business. Now is the time for the Haitian churches to be reformed than transformed. We can no longer be sealed and shut our mouth, too many of our youth are being destroyed by them. The walls are about to be broken and they will be built again bigger when they are ready to move with the movable youths.

Recommendation:

If we truly long to embrace His passion for justice, and if we sincerely wish to reflect an accurate image of God to the watching world we recommend these tangible steps.

1. Haitian leaders need to develop confidence in working with Haitian adolescents and professionals. During our interviews, a group of professional said the same thing at different times: Mr. James the Principal of the school, Mr. Thompson the Middle School Math teacher, Ms Carole and Ms Sandra, the lawyers, all stated on different occasions that the worst thing that we encountered in the Haitian churches is lack of confidence in working with our pastors. "They are so insecure, they always think

that you are here for their position . . . if you ask them a question, they feel threatened.”

For example, knowledge and discussion about current events that affect the Haitian churches are ways that facilitate positive therapeutic interactions and interventions with the adolescents and the leaders. Another example, which demonstrates the specific unique need of the Haitian adolescents, is in their interaction with adults and leaders. Haitian children do not look an adult straight in the eyes; they bow their heads. This could be viewed as a sign of intimidation or guilt, but rather in the Haitian culture, this is a sign of respect and obedience. If a Haitian child looks straight into the eyes of an adult, it's sign of disrespect and challenge.

2. Use the democratic style of leadership which allows everyone the possibility to

freely express themselves without fear of suppression. In doing so, many would develop their gift and talents for the purpose of self growth and church growth.

Further more many who are hurt through a dysfunctional environment can heal from all the elements experience through culture clash, identity crisis, inferiority complex, low self esteem among others.

APPENDIX A
DEED OF GIFT

Deed of Gift

I, _____,do hereby give the History Committee of Source Of Life Ministry Inc. of Miami the tape recorded interview recorded with me on _____ (date) as an unrestricted gift for Mrs. Previlus' dissertation at United Theological Seminary including all copyright. This gift does not preclude any use which I may want of make of the information in the recordings myself.

Accepted by:

Date
Interviewers Signature on behalf of Source of Life Ministry

Date
Interviewees Signature

(Interviewee Address and telephone Number)

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

The following questions were given as guidelines to persons doing one on-one interviews for the Church Story Model of Ministry at Source Of Life Ministry.

1. Were you ever in the Haitian church?
2. When did you start going to a Haitian church?
3. When did you stop going and why?
4. Do you remember any struggles that you had to go through in your old Haitian churches?
5. Were the youths including in the budget and how do you know?
6. When you left did you miss the church?
7. How are you and the people in the church?
8. What kind of communication problem did you encountered?
9. What happened when you tried to express yourself in the church?
10. What made you think that you were not important in the church?
11. How can you describe your experience in the church?
12. Do you think language has something to do with your exodus?
13. What would it take for you to come back?

APPENDIX C
HAITI PICTURE



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